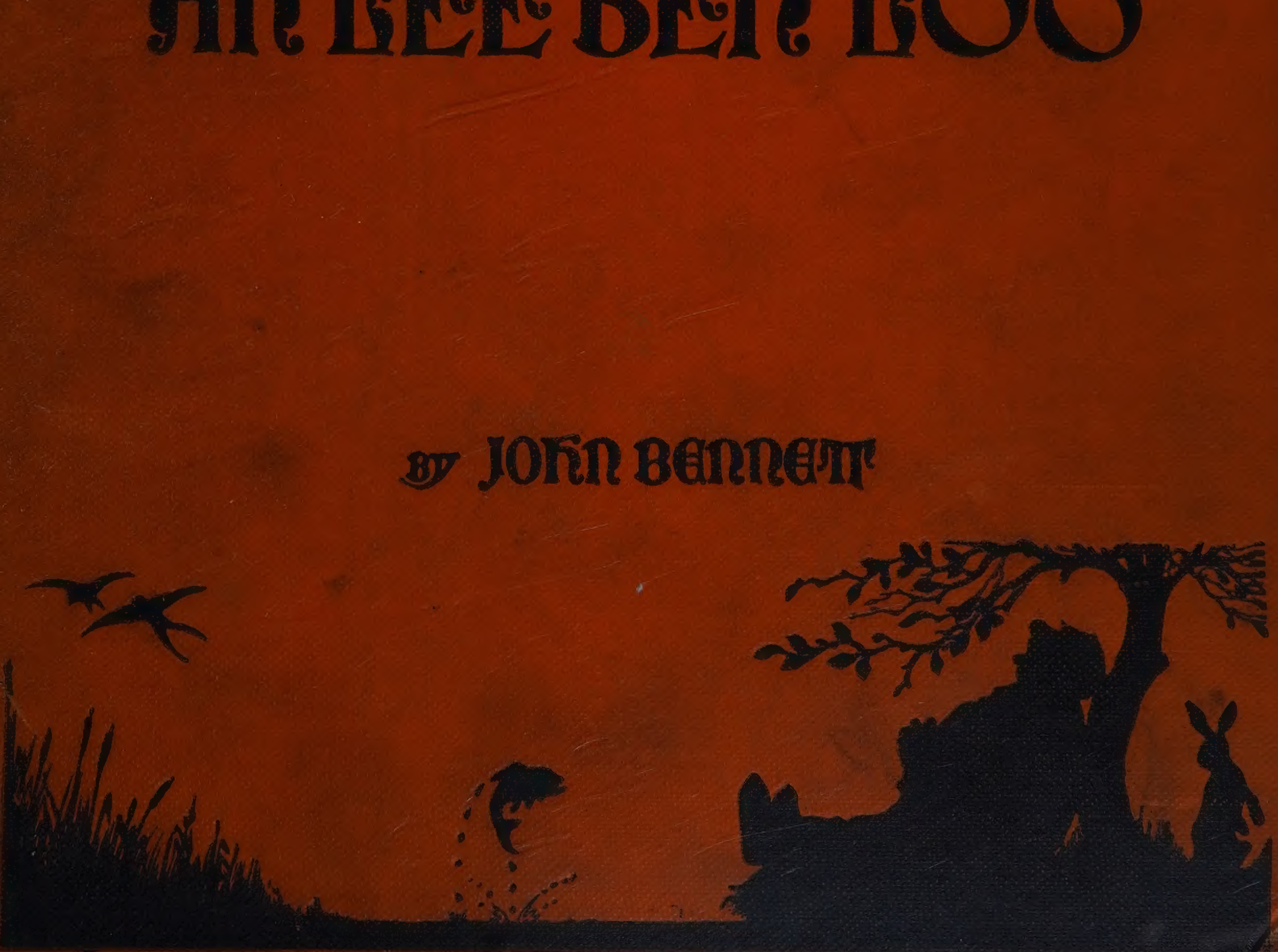
其好的洗衣館人之
髮尾
愛之眉

THE PIGTAIL OF AH LEE BEN LOO

BY JOHN BENNETT



CHILDREN'S ROOM

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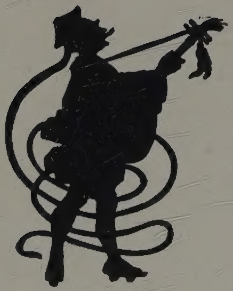

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THE PIGTAIL OF AH LEE BEN LOO

WITH
SEVENTEEN OTHER LAUGHABLE
TALES & 200 COMICAL
SILHOUETTES · BY

JOHN BENNETT

AUTHOR OF "MASTER
SKYLARK," ETC.

1724

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
NEW YORK · LONDON
1928

I. O.

CHILDREN'S ROOM

Children's Department
Adviser to adults

BENNETT
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To Susan

Grateful acknowledgment is made to *The Bachellor & Johnson Syndicate* for permission to reprint "The Merry Pieman and the Don's Daughter," and "The Land of the Impossible"; to *Life* for "When Knights were Bold"; to *Good Housekeeping* and to Miss Martha Trimble Bennett, for the adaptation, from Hans Sachs, of "The Basket: a Shadow-Play"; and to *The Century Company*, for general release of all material from *St. Nicholas*.

J. B.

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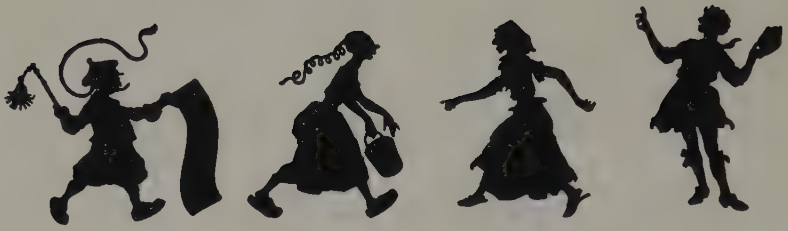

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THE
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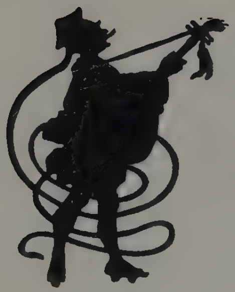
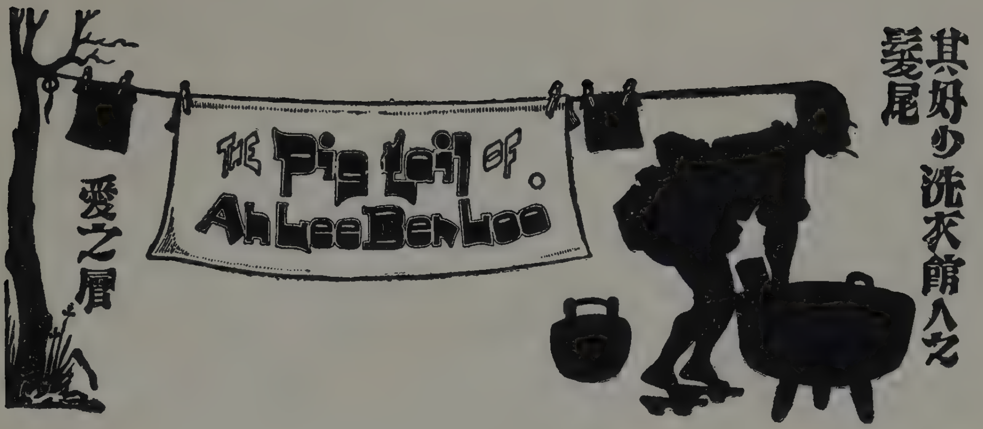
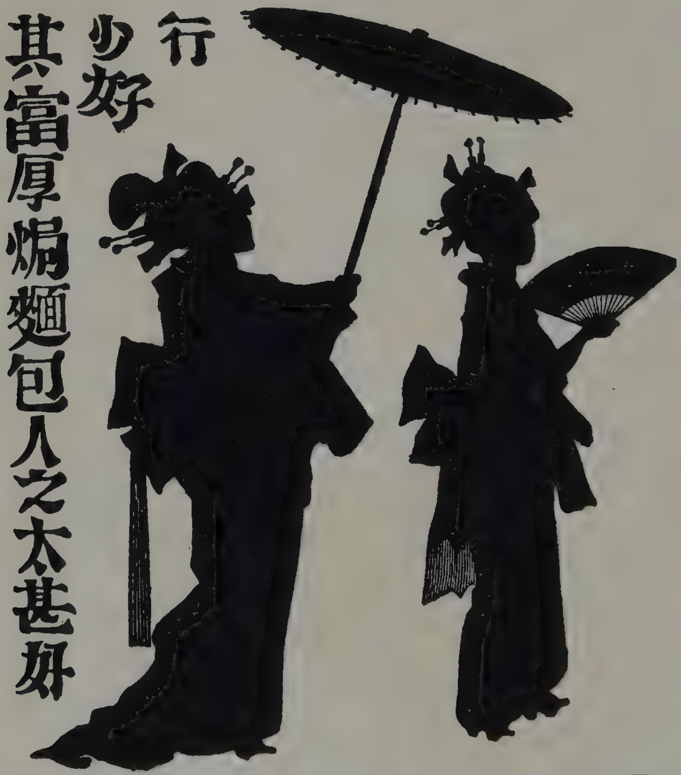



The Pig-tail of Ah Lee Ben Loo
其好少洗衣館入之髮尾
愛之眉

LONG AGO, in old China far over the sea,
In the reign of Hi-kik-i, the king,
There lived a rich baker, a turnover-maker,
Whose name was Li-Ching-i-Chang-Ching.
Li-Ching had a daughter as fair as the dawn,
Her complexion was famed all around,
And her feet were so small when she toddled at all,
They made little round holes in the ground.

Her eyes were like almonds; her teeth were like pearls;
And her cheeks were like roses and tan;
While her cute little chin had a dozen times been
Painted on a great mandarin's fan.
Her gowns were the latest of Japanese style,
Silk, embroidered with gold at Peking;
"Oh, there's nothing too good," said the whole neighborhood,
For the tea-gowns of sweet Ting-a-Ling!"

Next door to Li-Ching lived young Ah Lee Ben Loo,
A poor laundryman, worthy and wise,
Who spent half of his time writing rhythmical rhyme
To the lashes of Ting-a-Ling's eyes.

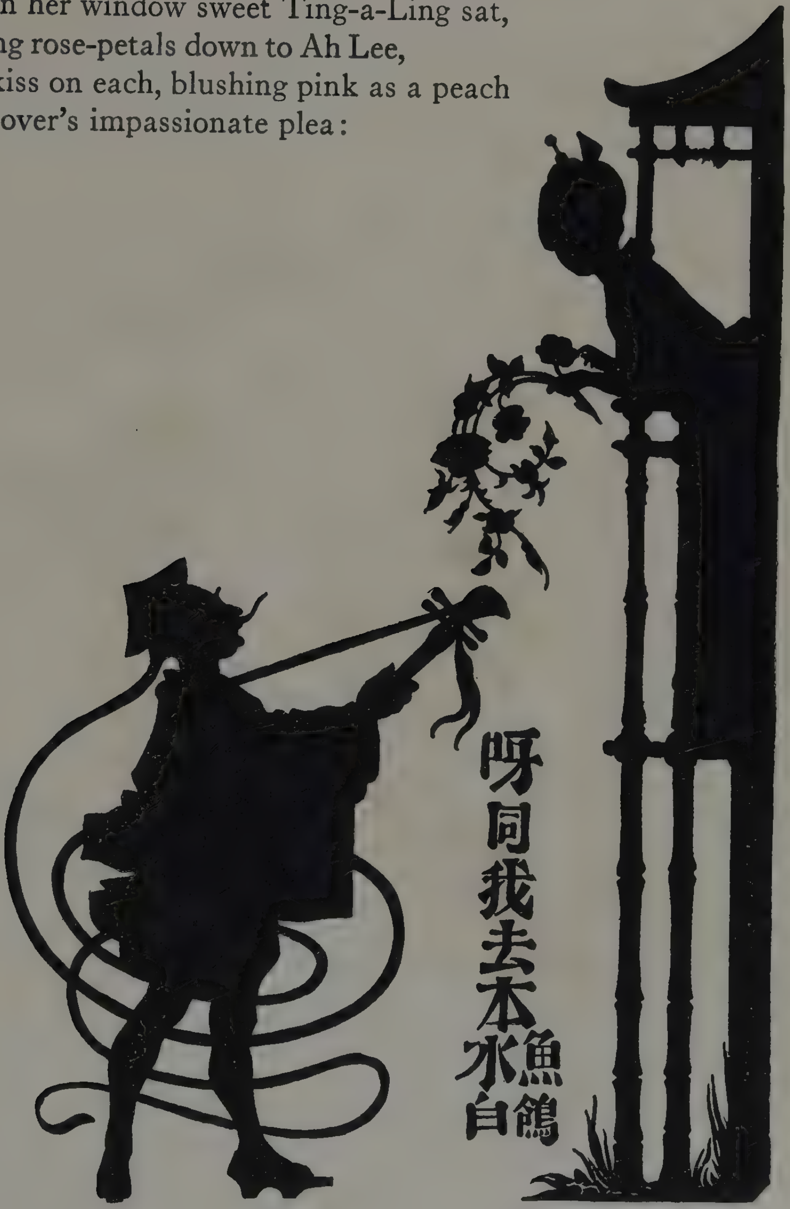


Li-Ching Had a Daughter as Fair as the Dawn.

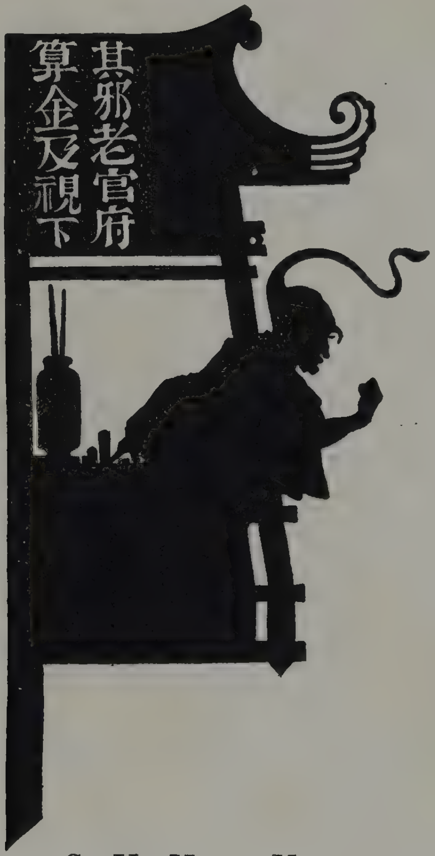
Deep into the night he would sit by his door,
And with melody floating afar
On the soft wings of June, he would sing to the moon
As he twangled his two-stringed guitar.

THE PIGTAIL OF AH LEE BEN LOO

While high in her window sweet Ting-a-Ling sat,
Dropping rose-petals down to Ah Lee,
With a shy kiss on each, blushing pink as a peach
At her lover's impassionate plea:



As He Twangled His Two-stringed Guitar.


其邪老官府
算金及視下

So He Hated Young Ah Lee Ben Loo.

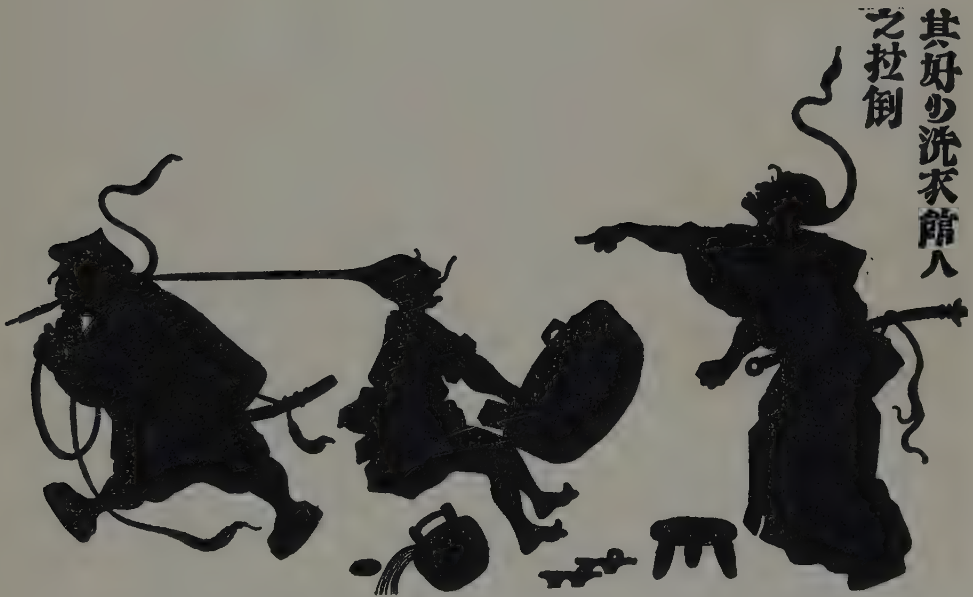
"Oh, my little turtle-dove,
Fly with me and be my love
On a crimson coral island in the south;
You shall have a golden fig
And a roasted piggy-wig
With a juicy little apple in his mouth.

"From your window fly with me
Far across the deep blue sea,
To a land where wash-days never, never come;
You shall live on pigeon-pies,
While I feast my loving eyes
On the darling little dimple in your thumb."

In a scalloped pagoda just over the way
Lived a mandarin wicked and old,
Who would snarl and look down with a hideous frown
At the lovers, while counting his gold;
For this miserly mandarin loved Ting-a-Ling,
And the jealous old curmudgeon knew
That the sweet Ting-a-Ling loved the man who could sing;
So he hated young Ah Lee Ben Loo.

Now Ah Lee Ben Loo had a wonderful queue —
It was fifteen feet long, by the by —

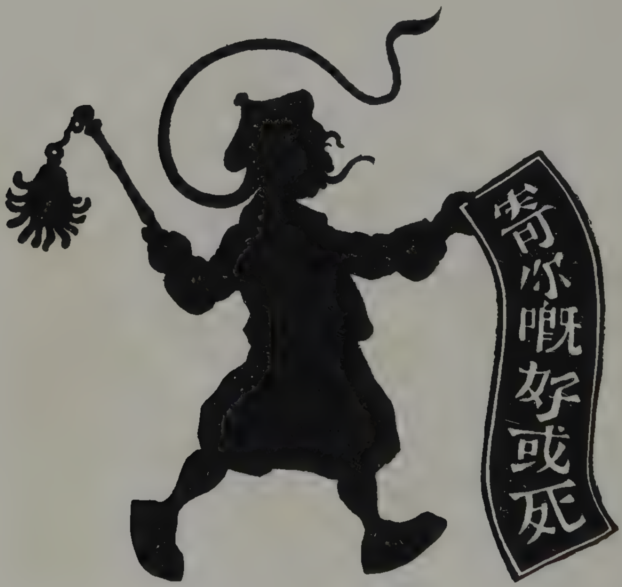
And this wonderful queue came in handily, too,
    When he hung out the week's wash to dry.
But one morning, while Ah Lee was scrubbing away,
    With his linen all out on the line,
The malignant old mandarin thought of a plan
    To promote his own jealous design.



The Law Never Spared Any Subject Who Dared.

Somewhere in an edict three thousand years old
    He had read this incredible thing:
That the law never spared any subject who dared
    Wear a longer pigtail than the king!
So he measured the tail of the busy Ah Lee,
    And away to the palace he flew
For an officer grim to accompany him
    And imprison poor Ah Lee Ben Loo.

In a dark dungeon cell overhanging the stream,
On the banks of the yellow Hwang-Ho,
In a tower sky-high Ah Lee waited to die
At the hands of his pitiless foe;
While the old mandarin with a hideous grin
Sent a message in haste to Li-Ching:
" If you value your life, send to me for a wife
Your fair daughter, the sweet Ting-a-Ling! "

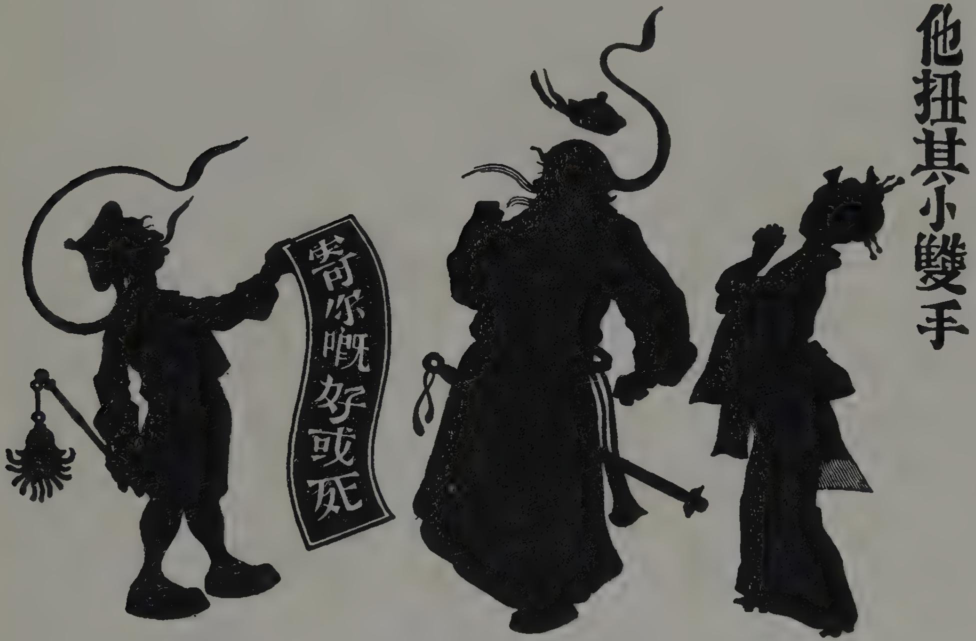


A Message in Haste to Li-Ching.

Then the sweet Ting-a-Ling wrung her hands in despair,
And as pale as a lily she grew;
" Oh, my father! " she said, " I would sooner be dead
Than to marry a man with a queue!
For since wearing a queue ruined Ah Lee Ben Loo
I shall hate a pigtail all my life;

And I'll float out to sea, for I sooner would be
A mermaid than a mandarin's wife!"

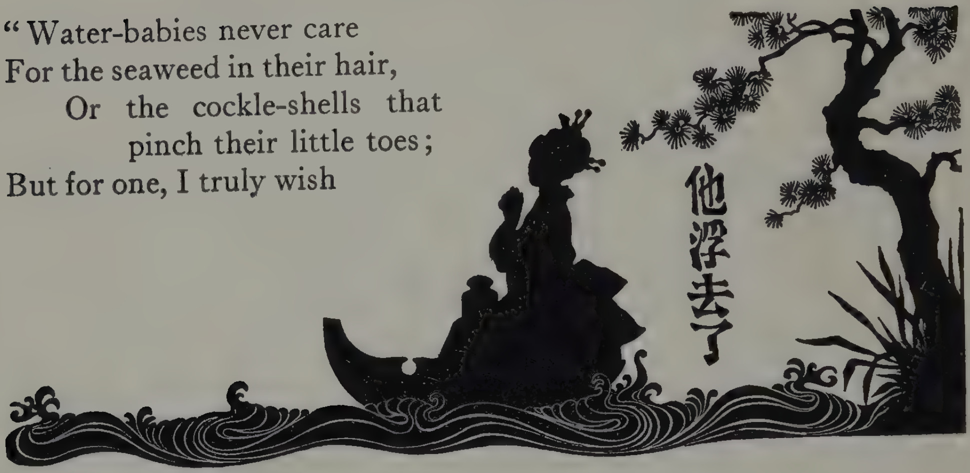
So she floated away in a little green boat
On the waves of the murmuring tide;
And she sang a sad song as she floated along
With a jar of preserves by her side:


他扭其小雙手
寄你嘅好或死

THEN THE SWEET TING-A-LING WRUNG HER HANDS IN DESPAIR.

"Oh my darling Ah Lee Ben,
If we ever meet again,
But a sea-green water-baby I will be,
Peddling pie and lollypops,
Sugar-plums and citron-drops
To the mermaids at the bottom of the sea.

"Water-babies never care
For the seaweed in their hair,
Or the cockle-shells that
pinch their little toes;
But for one, I truly wish



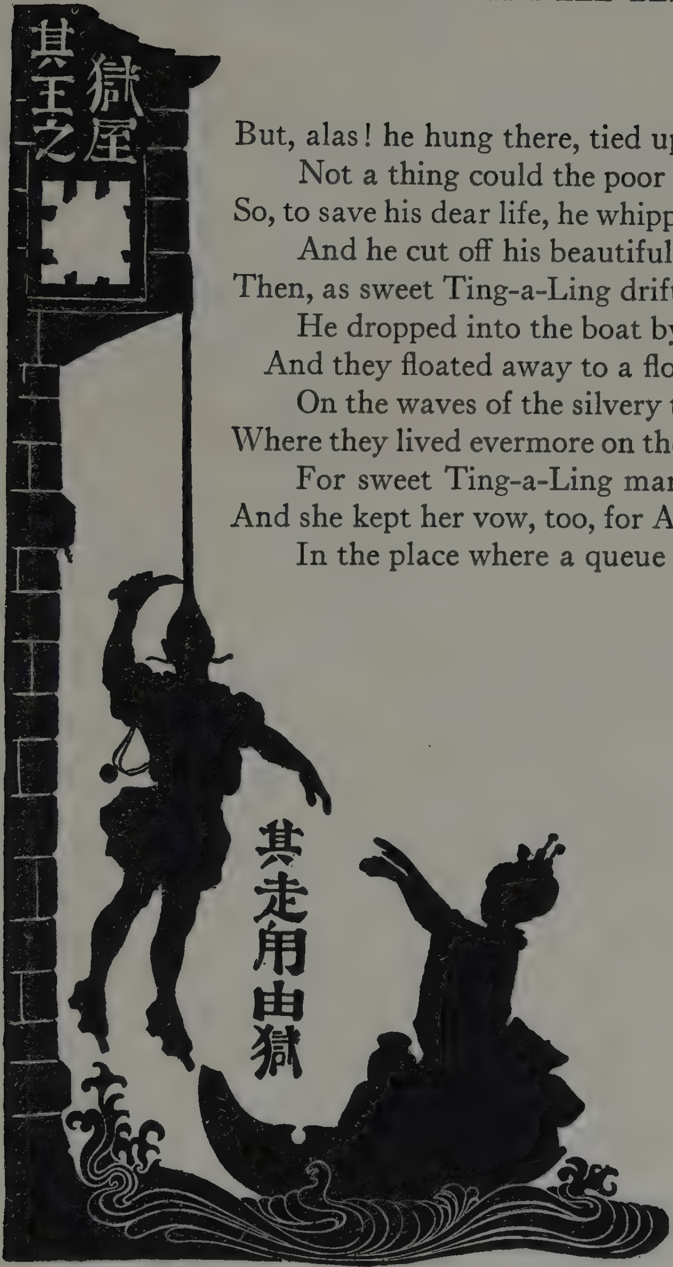
So She Floated Away in a Little Green Boat.

No ill-mannered little fish
To attempt to twirl his tail around my nose!"

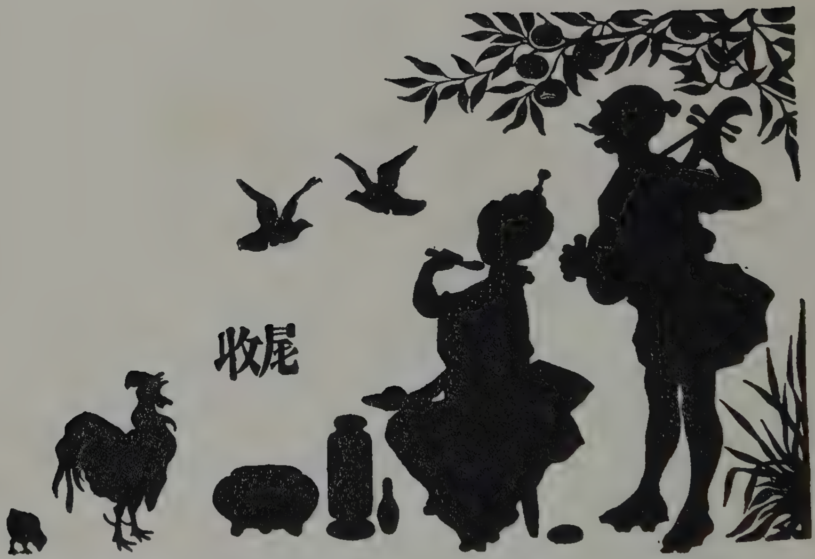
When Ah Lee, high above, heard the voice of his love,
To the window he flew in despair,
Broke out every bar with a blue ginger-jar,
And then let himself down by the hair!

How it happened is something that nobody knows,
But without either rudder or oar
The river waves swirled and the little boat whirled
Close in under the shadowy shore,
Just as Ah Lee Ben Loo, on the end of his queue,
At the risk of a terrible fall,
Clambered hand over hand down the quivering strand
From the window high up in the wall.

But, alas! he hung there, tied up tight by the hair;
Not a thing could the poor fellow do.
So, to save his dear life, he whipped out his jack-knife
And he cut off his beautiful queue.
Then, as sweet Ting-a-Ling drifted swiftly along,
He dropped into the boat by her side,
And they floated away to a flowery bay
On the waves of the silvery tide,
Where they lived evermore on the sunshiny shore:
For sweet Ting-a-Ling married Ah Lee —
And she kept her vow, too, for Ah Lee had no queue
In the place where a queue ought to be.



And He Cut Off His Beautiful Queue.



THEY LIVED EVERMORE ON THE SUNSHINY SHORE.

The Astonishing Story of the Caliph's Clock

I

IT WAS morning in the ancient city of Chunder-abad-dad.

In the palace courtyard the sound of dancing water struck upon the listening ear.

The Caliph sat on his divan moodily stroking his beard. Suddenly he called, impatiently:

"Selim! Are you never coming to breakfast?"

As he spoke he cracked and emptied into his cup the last of the soft-boiled eggs.

The Grand Vizir laid down the morning paper, which he had been reading, tucked his toes hastily into his carpet-slippers, and scuffled hurriedly to his seat.

"Oh, come!" said he. "Where are the eggs?"

"I have eaten them," replied the Caliph calmly. "If you will not come on time to breakfast, you cannot expect to have eggs."

"How could I know it was breakfast time? You did not ring any bell."

"You could look at the hour-glass."

"It leaks," replied the Vizir. "Somebody cracked it . . . not I."

"The fact is enough without the reminiscence," said the Caliph, stiffly. "Why did you not observe the sun-dial?"

"There was a dark cloud over the sun."

"Then look at the water-clock."

"But, Sire, you remember, we poured the fluid from the water-clock into the gold-fish bowl, during the water shortage."

"Oh, yes . . . I remember."

"And the gold-fish died."

"Tut, tut! You remember too much!" said the Caliph bleakly. "We should be happier if you remembered less, or recalled only pleasant things. Where are your monthly reports?"

"Alas! Your royal Effulgence," said the Vizir, "the days are not long enough."

"You have all the time that Allah gives. If you but saved the hours you waste, and applied them to serious ends, you might accomplish master-pieces."

"The palace lamps are dim," continued the Vizir stubbornly.

"Will you never learn?" sighed the Caliph. "Had you not wasted your sunshine you might very easily have done your reports. You must make hay while the sun shines."

"Oh, yes," said the Vizir sulkily. "I have heard that many times. But nobody nowadays makes any hay; everyone buys it baled. Why don't you have a sun-dial which will work in cloudy weather?"

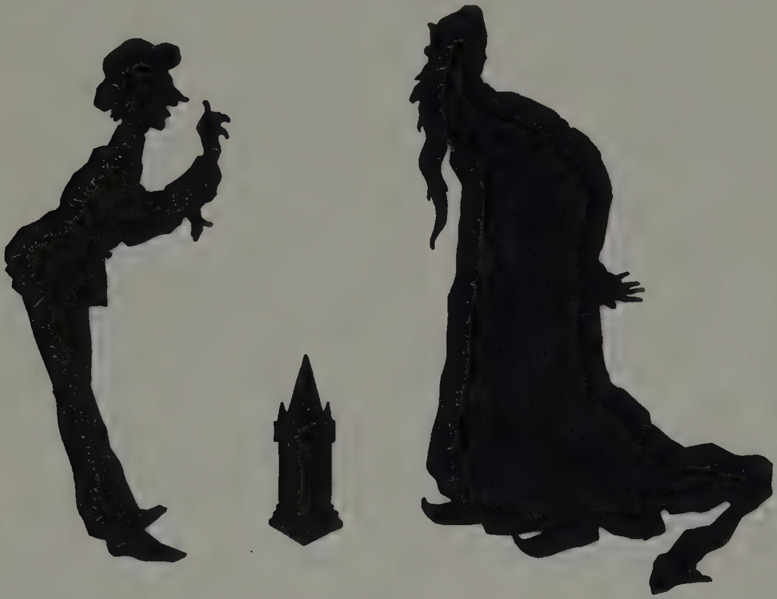
"Cloudy weather?" exclaimed the Caliph. "This is not cloudy weather!"

"It is for me," said the Vizir ruefully, and subsided into gloom.

II

THREE hours later a wandering Yankee peddler knocked at the palace door.

He wore a pinch-backed coat, a bright green hat, had long, elastic legs, white spatter-dashes, and an air of disconcerting superiority. He said, and very briskly said, that he had clocks to sell.



THE PEDDLER BRISKLY SAID THAT HE HAD CLOCKS TO SELL.

" Clocks? " said the Caliph, curious, as he arose from his cushions: "Clocks? Let's see them."

The peddler produced a time-piece.

"This unparalleled chronometer," he said, " runs forty days and forty nights, like the rain which rained on Noah, and announces the hours with a golden tongue."

" No," said the Caliph sharply. " I don't want one with a tongue. We have tongues enough in the palace now."

"This clock has cathedral chimes and a cuckoo," said the peddler, cheerfully. "With a dumb cuckoo for nervous homes."

"Will it make absent-minded idlers come in time to meals?" asked the Caliph, looking grumpily at Selim.

"It will," said the peddler confidently. He slipped his hand inside the clock and twisted something which made the insides cluck like a hen. The clock began to go faster. The peddler smiled.

"This," said he, "is a wonderful clock for communities which wish to keep up with the time."

"Will it inspire idle people to employ their wasted hours?"

"Adopt our daylight-saving plan, and there will be no wasted hours."

"Daylight-saving plan?" exclaimed the Caliph. "And will this clock save daylight?"

"Sire," replied the peddler. "This clock will save daylight as a stingy man saves pennies. One uses but part of his daylight, and saves the rest to employ in healthful recreations, such as sea-bathing, golf, tennis, cabinet-making and unmaking, changing one's mind, and amateur theatricals. Our daylight-saving attachment sells at ten dinars. We can make it six dinars to you. Shall I say 'Sold'?"

The Secretary of the Treasury cleared his throat loudly. The Caliph hesitated.

The pleasant peddler waved his hands. "This unparalleled timepiece runs forty days and forty nights with but a single winding," said he. "It has a musical attachment which plays twelve perfectly ripping tunes. The cuckoo cucks on the hour, and koos at the half-hour, or is dumb, as the purchaser pleases."

"It is just what I am looking for," said the Caliph. The Treasurer again said "Hem!" The Caliph hesitated.

"With every daylight-saving device we give a thousand circulars extolling the merits of daylight-saving as conducted by our clock."

"I want it," said the Caliph. "Hem! Hem!" said the Treasurer.

"To install the daylight-saving device is marvelously easy," said the peddler. "Just set your sun-dials by the clock . . . go to bed, and forget it. When you wake in the morning you'll be surprised to see what time it is."

"I often am!" said the Grand Vizir.

"I must have it," said the Caliph, and forthwith purchased the clock of the peddler for forty zecchins in gold.

"This will be a great economy, Selim," he said. "We shall save much time."

"But why should we save time?" asked the Vizir. "I would much rather spend it."

"Tut! You have an extravagant nature!" said the Caliph reprovingly.

At that the clock struck so sharply that it made the Grand Vizir almost leap out of his slippers.

"Aha!" said the Caliph grimly. "It does more than thunder could."

III

"WE shall begin at once to save daylight!" said the Caliph. "We shall now keep up with the times!" He sank back in his cushions with the air of an Alexander who has no more worlds to conquer. "Go; set all the sun-dials in the town to keep time with my clock!"

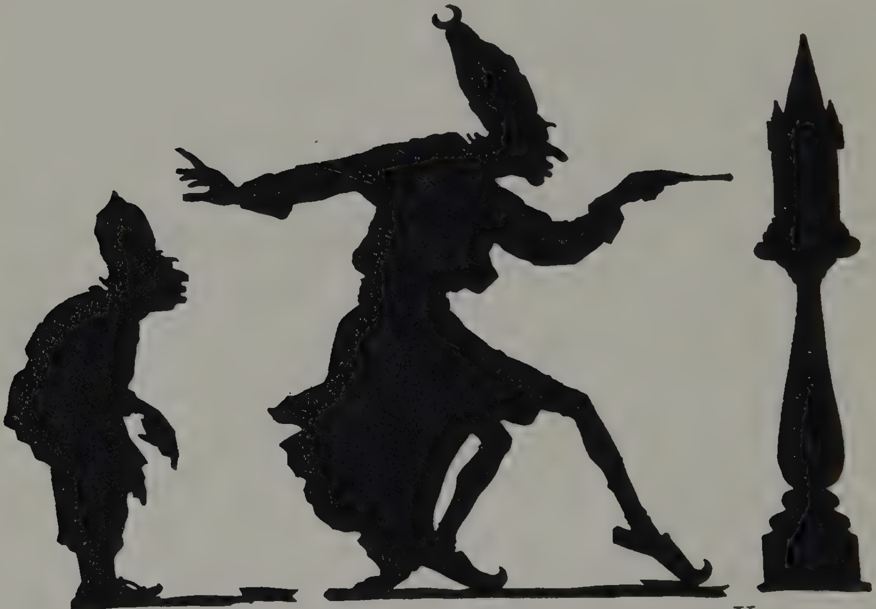
"Now, Selim," he said to the Grand Vizir. "I have got you a timepiece guaranteed to waste no golden moments. You shall emulate the busy bee: you shall improve each shining hour. You will run by this clock . . . not a minute ahead, nor a minute behind, or prepare for the consequences."

Then he caused the clock to be set up on a column of porphyry in the middle of the courtyard, and published a proclamation throughout the city, saying:

"I am the Caliph of Chunder-abad-dad, and I have established a Clock. The time of it is my time; the hours of it are the right time; its hours are those of the Faithful. Henceforth there shall be no other time in the imperial city of Chunder-abad-dad."

"Now, wind it up!" he said.

The official clock-winder inserted the key, and wound the Caliph's clock.



The Official Clock-winder Inserted the Key.

It was a brand-new, shrill-voiced Yankee clock, with a landscape painted on the door, and a shiny round brass pendulum. Within was a label: "Hartford, Connecticut, U. S. A.; patented lever attachment."

When it was wound for the first official winding, it started with a double chime and such a strange and dubious whirr in its insides that the clock-winder ducked.

The pendulum began to vibrate with an alert, sharp sound, with a clicking of escapements, a clattering of levers, and a brisk, hurrying ting-a-ling of an impetuous silvery bell. The minute-hand started its steady round. The hour-hand began its pompous revolution. The second-hand danced and capered like a midge. The fateful clock was going.

"Henceforth," said the Caliph, "there shall be no other time in the city of Chunder-abad-dad!"

IV

NOW, everything had been going very well in Chunder-abad-dad.

No one had been more discontented or dissatisfied than usual. The muezzins called the Faithful regularly to prayer; and a man might sit all day in his door and watch the beggars asleep in the street; and, when night came, might lie down with peaceful mind to untroubled rest.

The price of luxuries was high, to be sure; but the rich were opulent. The poor were not yet needy enough to consider their poverty a disgrace. The beggars, having nothing to lose, were entirely content. Food was to be had for a song; and those who could not sing might whistle; so hunger was unknown. The times in Chunder-abad-dad did very well indeed.

In fact, Chunder-abad-dad might truly be said to have been happy.

And when an old city is as happy as Chunder-abad-dad, it seems a shame to disturb its peace. And Chunder-abad-dad's peace was disturbed.

Watchmen went about the streets everywhere, crying:

"Set your sun-dials! Set your sun-dials by the Caliph's clock! Who wastes his hours throws away the golden gift of Allah! Set your sun-dials!"

The new time was to begin at high-noon, the hour when all the Faithful kneel to give thanks unto Allah for his many manifestations of mercy.

Not to run by the Caliph's clock was declared to be a serious misdemeanor. To speak ill of the Caliph's clock was pronounced to be high treason. And comment, even though unspoken, if other than approval, was denounced as misprision of treason.

Chunder-abad-dad's peace was seriously disturbed.

V

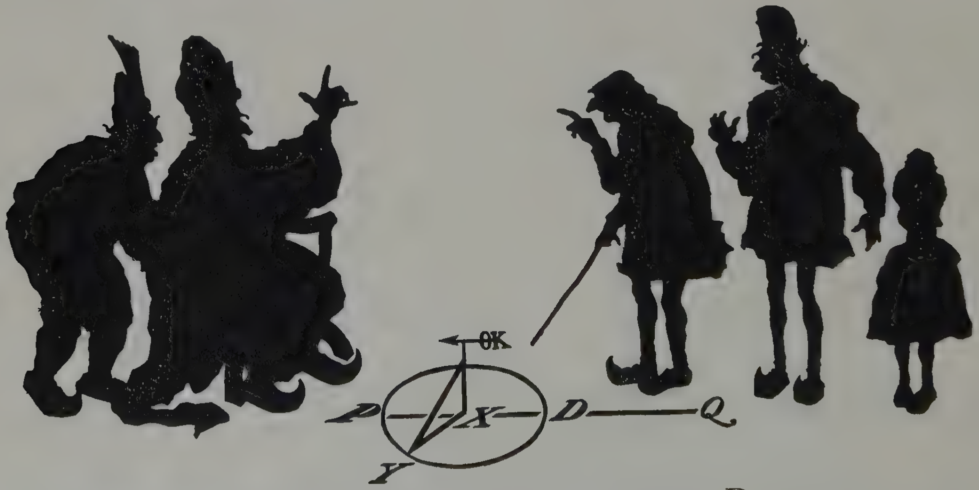
PROMPTLY at high-noon the Royal High Constable set the Great Sun-Dial to conform to the Caliph's Clock.

At half-past twelve somebody turned it back again. Council was opposed to tinkering with the hours. They said that Allah had made them, and they were not man's to change.

To solve the difficulty someone proposed to put two markers on the Great Dial, one for daylight-saving, the other for Allah's hours. One marker thus would keep the new time, while the old time remained as it was.

This they thought would satisfy everyone . . . indeed, it might have done so.

But the More Conservative Diallers, who had studied astronomy, were uncertain about this plan.



"WHAT I CHIEFLY DREAD," SAID THE OLDEST DIALLER TO THE CALIPH, "IS THAT SOMEONE MAY JOGGLE THE AL-MU-CAN-TAR!"

They said that affixing an additional hand to the dial was no simple matter; that the entire Balance of the Spheres might be disturbed by the operation, the heavens go wrong, and the earth get quite hopelessly mixed up on its course.

The difficulty of the task, and the need of very superior ability in the operation, were fully explained by the Diallers.

"What I chiefly dread," said the Oldest Dialler to the Caliph, "is that someone may joggle the AL–MU–CAN–TAR! That would be very difficult!"

"Difficult indeed!" said the second Dialler.

"E-nor-mous-ly difficult!" said the least Dialler.

"The AL–MU–CAN–TAR?" asked the Caliph curiously. "What is that?"

"Why," replied the Chief Dialler, a very erudite man, "the AL–MU–CAN–TAR *is a small circle of the sphere, parallel to the horizon found by combining the product of the sine by the sub-lu-na-ry node with the co-ad-ja-cent fo-cus of the existing re-tro-grade reflex co-tan-gent.*"

"Ah-h!" said the Caliph. "One should indeed be very careful with it!"

"We shall be," replied the Diallers.

"One should be extraordinarily careful," continued the Caliph, "with things having three and four syllables. They are, to begin with, difficult to get right; and, if one disarrange them, it may be impossible ever to get them straight again. I charge you, therefore, to use extraordinary care in all that you do with the AL–MU . . . AL–MU . . ."

"AL–MU–CAN–TAR."

"Yes. Be sure not to joggle it!"

"Perhaps," suggested the Grand Vizir, "if you were to pin down the syllables before you begin, it might keep them in place until you have done joggling the what-you-may-call-'um!"

"If I were you, Selim," said the Caliph haughtily, "I would not meddle with matters having more than two syllables. Your spelling is something queer."

"Indeed, your Highness," said Selim earnestly, "I have no desire to meddle with matters having more than two syllables. I have no wish whatever to interfere with al-mu-can-tars, sal-ma-gun-dies, or al-li-ga-tors. One sounds just as difficult and as dangerous as the other!"

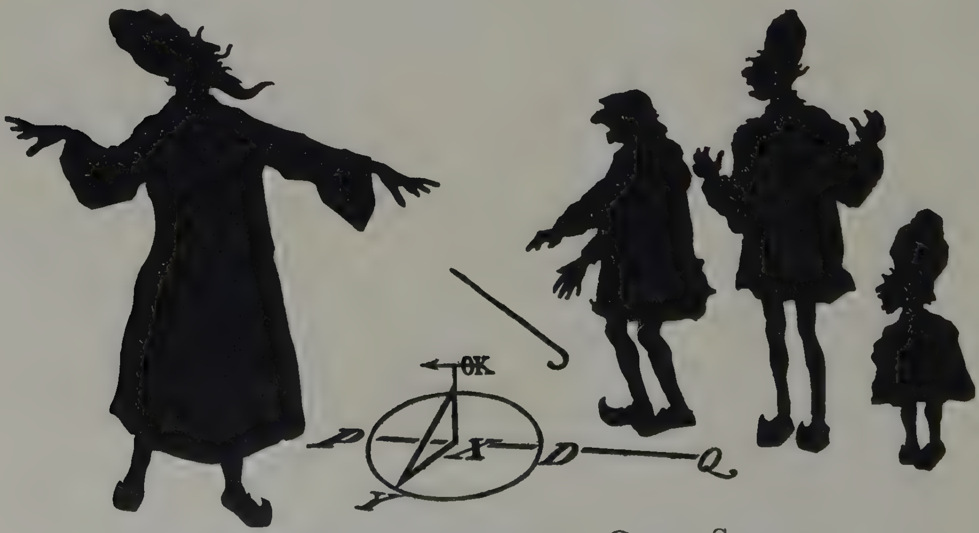
The Caliph dearly loved, and never understood, high-sounding scientific terms. He was thrilled with this discussion, although he did not comprehend it in the least.

"You see, Selim," he said to the Grand Vizir, "I have a scientific mind. I understand the calculations of astronomy. I am accomplished in things like cycles. I am accustomed to eras."

"So am I," replied Selim, bridling. "I, too, am accustomed to errors . . . I make a great many."

"I did not say 'er-rors,' simpleton," said the Caliph, petulantly, "but 'E R A S,' long divisions of time."

"Oh!" said the Vizir ruefully. "I never could do long divisions.



So Saying, He Abolished the Great Sun-dial.

I barely got through the multiplication tables. Everyone said I was dull."

"For once," said the Caliph grimly, "everybody was right."

"That may be," retorted the Vizir sulkily. "But I maintain that things of three and four syllables are given only to trip people up. And if one joggles a thing of four syllables, like an AL–MU–CAN–TAR, there will certainly be trouble!"

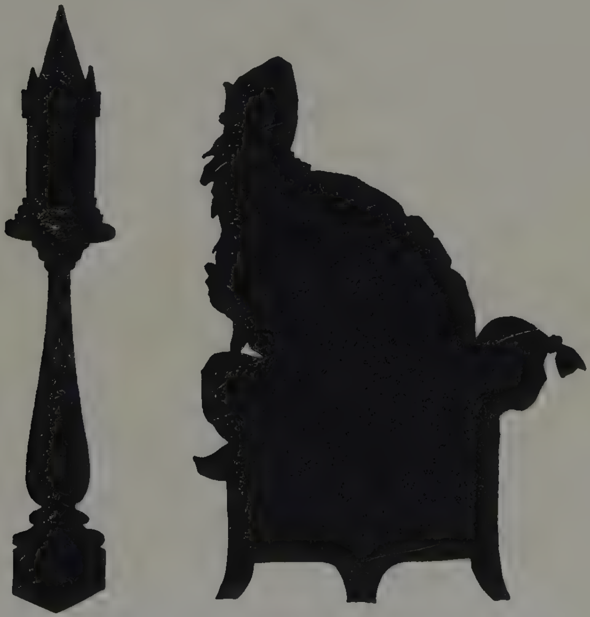
"I will assume the responsibility!" said the Caliph haughtily. And so saying he abolished the Great Sun-Dial.

There was nothing left in the city to mark the official flight of time but the Caliph's clock.

VI

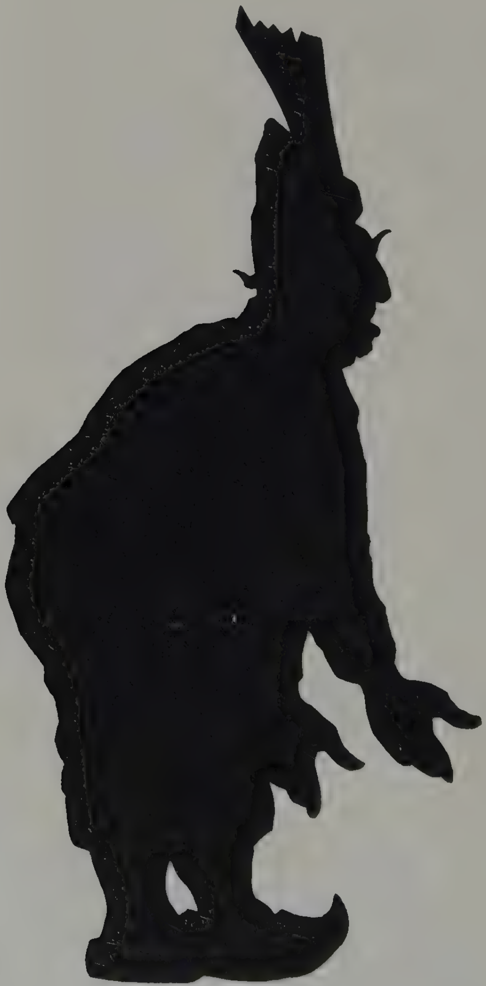
THE Caliph sat for hours, watching the pendulum swing.

"It seems incredible, Selim," said he, "that this little shiny brass



The Caliph Sat for Hours, Watching the Pendulum Swing.

thing should control the universe, sun, moon and stars, and the motions of the planets which circulate in space, to say nothing of the asteroids which scuttle around at random in the measureless void . . . that it should regulate the seasons, make us grow old, turn our hair



"WHO AM I, THAT I SHOULD HURRY UP THE EVENING?"

white, make our teeth fall out, and our faces wrinkle like withering tamarinds, all with that little tick-tick-tock!"

"Does that little wabbling thing do all that?" asked Selim, staring at the vibrating pendulum.

"All that, and more," said the Caliph. "Is it not amazing?"

"Stu-pend-ous!" replied the Vizir with an uneasy look. He had that very morning found four unwelcome gray hairs in his eye-brow. "Plague take the thing!" he muttered. "It has a malevolent look, and sounds like a guinea-hen in the rain!"

The clock was running with a dubious whirr, which never ceased nor altered, but seemed hourly to go faster and faster.

"How fast the time flies!" he said nervously.

"Yes," replied the Caliph. "The days are so long at this season that time has to fly fast to get through."

"And the morning is oddly short, Sire. See, it is already half-past ten!"

"Oh, that is the daylight-saving device," said the Caliph carelessly. "It is saving part of the day. By thus using less in the morning, we shall have more in the afternoon. It is indeed ingenious."

"Ingenious? Hum-m-m!" said Selim.

VII

THE DAY passed, and evening came gently up the east.

The Caliph sat by his window. There was a troubled look on his face. He held an almanac in his hand, and he had one eye on the clock.

"Selim," he said uneasily, peering out of the window. "It is high time it should be dusk. I wish you would go out and see what is the matter?"

"Is anything wrong, your Highness?"

"Yes," said the Caliph, worried. "The sun is an hour late."

"Bismillah!" exclaimed the Grand Vizir. "That is not my fault, your Effulgence!"

"But," said the Caliph, "sunset is due at ten minutes past six by the almanac. It is more than an hour behind time. I wish you would go out and attend to it."

The Vizir prostrated himself. "Your Highness," he cried, "who am I, that I should hurry up the evening? Or meddle with the arrangement of the celestial spheres?"

The Caliph eyed him suspiciously. "Selim," said he, "are you concealing anything behind those large words?"

"No, Sire," protested the Vizir.

"Then go see about the sunset! It is past the seventh hour by the clock."

The Vizir, seeing himself to be in for it, grovelled upon the mat, which was not very clean. "But, your Highness," he said, "it cannot be sunset until the sun sets."

"What?" cried the Caliph. "Must I wait on the sun? Am I not the Caliph? Is it not mine to say what the hours shall be in Chunder-abad-dad?"

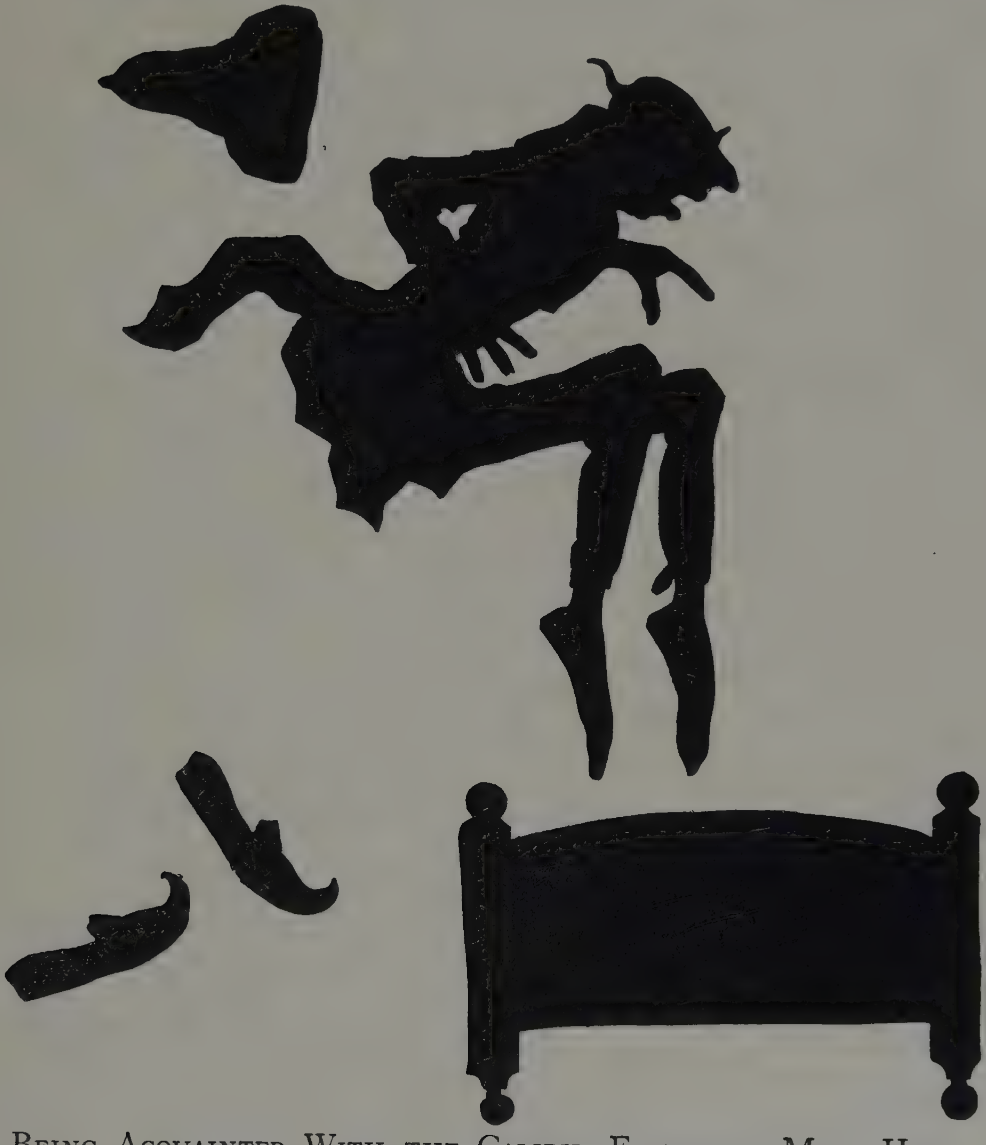
"Surely!" replied the Vizir. "But, your Highness, does not the sun set at sun-set? And is it not sun-set when the sun sets? How can it then be sun-set until the sun does set? We have but one sun, and only when it sets is it sun-set!"

The Caliph looked dazed. "By the prophet's beard! Selim," he said. "You can say less in more words than anyone I have ever heard." He frowned. "Let the sun set when it will. I will attend to the sun-set! When my clock says '*This is sun-set!*' it shall be sun-set. This clock is my clock. Its hours are the right hours. There shall be no other time whatever in the city of Chunder-abad-dad!"

He tossed the hour-glass out of the window. It fell with a crash in the street. "Go!" he said. "Send all the people to bed. It is high time they retired."

Being acquainted with the Caliph, everybody made haste to go to bed.

But the Vizir could not get to sleep. He heard somebody stirring,



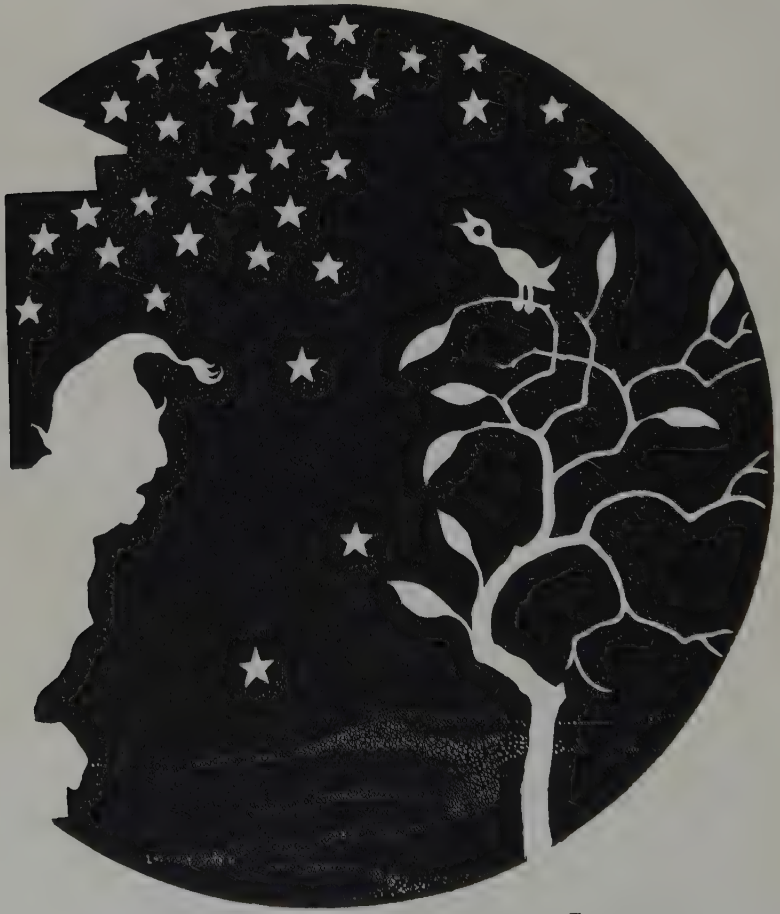
Being Acquainted With the Caliph, Everybody Made Haste to go to Bed.

and softly cleared his throat. The Caliph coughed. The Vizir coughed.

"Selim," called the Caliph. "There was no reason whatever for you to worry me so about the sun-set, and fret the whole palace as you did. It was the daylight-saving device."

"How?" said the wondering Vizir.

"Why, by using less time in the morning, and doing without at



THE NIGHTINGALE WAS STILL SINGING.

dusk, we have already saved an hour to be used at some other time!"

"Merciful Allah!" gasped the Vizir. "Truly, daylight-saving devices are very wonderful things! I can sleep just that much later in the morning."

With a sigh of deep contentment he turned on his pillow.

VIII

SOMETIME in the night the Vizir awoke, and, being very thirsty, went out to the hydrant in the courtyard to get himself a drink.

In the hush that was over the city he could hear the splash of fountains, and in the palace courtyard, the Caliph's clock, running with a strange, uneasy sound.

It had been running fast at sun-set. It was running faster now. It sounded as if it were running a race with itself, and were gaining on every round. He could hear it catch step, and break again, at every dozen tick-tocks.

It struck twice as he stood in the courtyard.

It struck thrice as he crept into bed.

It struck four times as he fell asleep.

And while all the world was as black as your hat, he heard the Caliph cry, "Breakfast!"

It was intensely dark; the chill of night was in the air, and the stars were in the sky. The nightingale was still singing.

"Breakfast!" gasped the Vizir as he sat up in his bed. "Why, we have just had supper!"

"The clock says it is breakfast-time!" said the Caliph. "Come down to breakfast promptly, or I will know the reason why."

"But I cannot eat a mouthful!" protested the Vizir.

"You'd better!" growled the Caliph. His voice was bitterly cold. "If I catch you slighting the buckwheat cakes, we shall have an account to settle."

The Vizir ate a large breakfast. In fact he ate a surfeit.

As he finished his oatmeal the clock struck nine.

As he ate his buckwheats the clock struck ten.

As he drank his coffee it struck again.

"Go!" cried the Caliph. "Drive the beasts to pasture before the morning is spent!"

The Vizir looked at the Caliph's eye. It was red as a ruby-stone.

He hurried out to the stables, awoke the sheep, aroused the goats, and drove the cows to pasture.

There was nothing stirring in all the world but dorbugs, cockchafers, and whippoorwills. It was very dark. The sheep and the goats would not stay awake; the cows bellowed dolorously. The air was bleak; the stars still shone; the bats were all about.

He ran back through the darkness, stubbing his toes on the road. It was pitch-black in the courtyard. It was pitch-black everywhere. As he entered the gate the clock struck twelve, and a rattling noon-chime followed. As if to make assurance sure he heard the cuckoo call. From the minarets high overhead the muezzins cried "To prayer!"

"Bismillah!" gasped the Vizir. "Bismillah feroosh! What next? Has the sun slipped off its axle-tree, and the world turned upside-down?"

A dreadful suspicion crept into his mind . . . *somebody had joggled the AL–MU–CAN–TAR!*

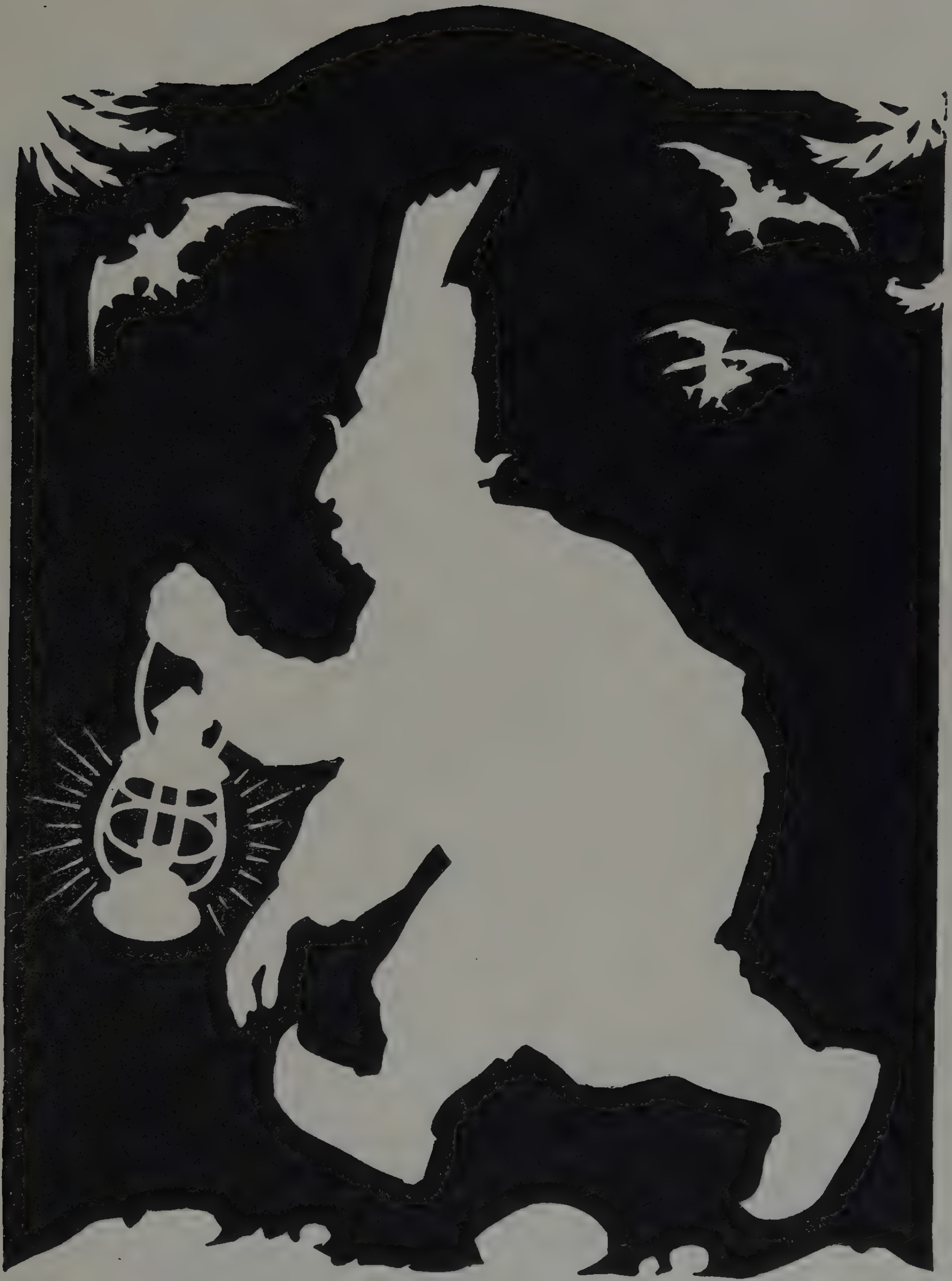
It came upon him with a shock which benumbed his faculties. His toes stood up with terror; his hair waved on his head like grass.

Someone had joggled the AL–MU–CAN–TAR, and the world was upside-down!

IX

HE tottered up the palace-steps just as the red sun rose.

The Caliph was eating gloomily. He looked up with a moody frown. "Are you aware that it is dinner-time?"



He Ran Back Through the Darkness.

"Dinner-time?" stammered the Vizir.

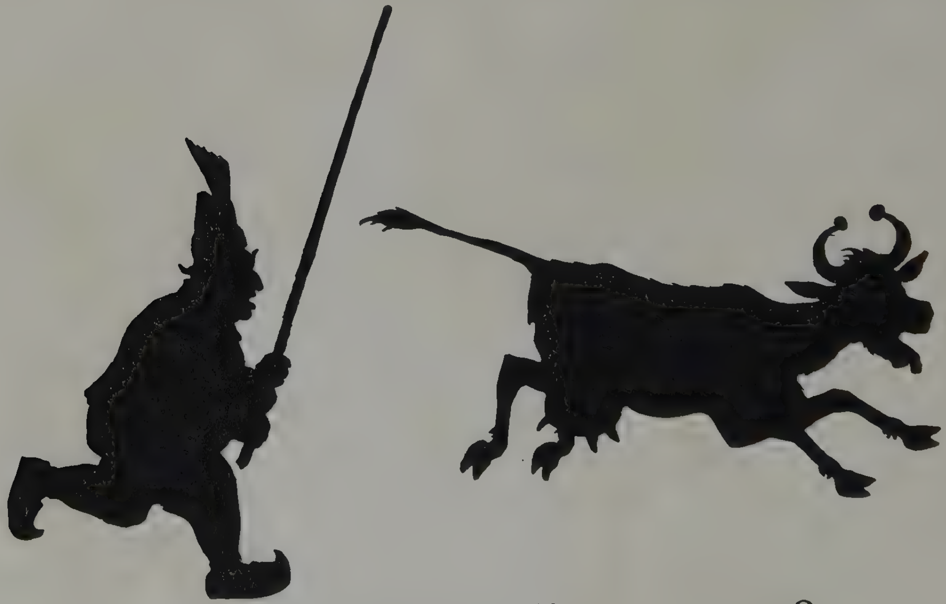
"It is twelve o'clock," said the Caliph. "It is high-noon by the clock."

"It is not high-noon by the noon-mark on the stones in the palace-yard; the sun is this minute rising!" replied the Vizir hastily.

"Don't argue with me," said the Caliph. "I abominate argument."

"I was not arguing with you; I was simply stating the fact; stating a fact is not argument."

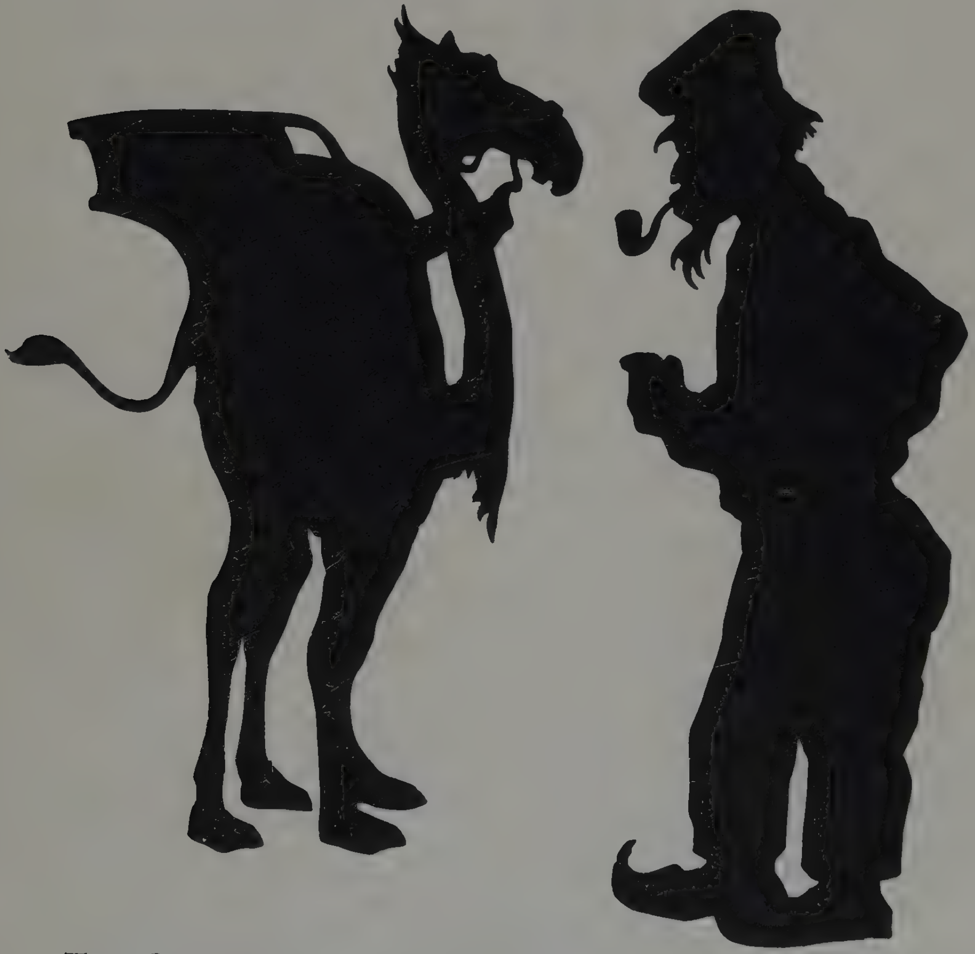
"Well," said the Caliph sourly, "we are not running by noon-marks. At its best a noon-mark is right but once a day. It were foolish to arrange the world's affairs by a mark which is right but once a day. I am arranging them by the clock. So are the prudent and wise. Have you any objections?"



The Vizir Chased the Cows Home from the Oasis.

"No . . . no . . . none worth speaking about."

"Then, why," said the Caliph crossly, "why are you always speaking about them? Why do you always cross me? When the clock strikes twelve, and I say *It is twelve!* why do you contradict me? That clock cost forty zecchins in gold: it stands to reason it's right. I am not arguing; I am just telling you. I am the Caliph of Chunder-abaddad, not an argument. See; the clock says it is twilight! You'd better go put up the stock."



THE CADI OF DAMAGHAN CAME OVER TO TRADE CAMELS.

The sun shone bright in the heavens; the bulbul was singing amain; the whole earth rang with the jubilance of a perfect Arabian day.

The Vizir chased the cows home from the oasis; pent up the herds; folded the flocks; hustled the fowls into the hen-house; shook down straw for the camels and asses; gave the elephants hay, and came sheepishly back to the palace.

"Someone is wasting a deal of daylight," he said, to nobody in particular, as he eyed the rising day.

"Wasting daylight?" cried the Caliph. "How can one be wasting daylight who is not using it? One cannot waste what he does not use. Nobody is wasting daylight. The profligate sun may be wasting day on the broad Arabian plain; but *we* are not wasting daylight. We are saving quantities. Day by day we are saving time," said the Caliph, rubbing his hands. "Hour by hour we are gaining upon the sun. Soon we shall have whole days to dispose of!"

And the clock went scuttling along.

X

NEXT forenoon the Cadi of Damaghan came over to trade camels.

The glory of the morning clothed the Arabian hills.

"It is now too late to trade camels," said the Caliph crustily.

"It is not yet dinner-time," said the Cadi.

"What?" cried the Caliph. He looked at the clock, and turned to the Cadi with a jaundiced eye. "It is half-past nine at night, my friend. You had better be pushing for home!"

"Half-past nine, your granny's foot! It is half-past ten in the morning. I think you don't want to trade camels."

"I shall be glad to trade camels by daylight," retorted the Caliph curtly. "But not after nightfall. It is too dark to trade camels by night."

The Cadi stared. "Who wants to trade camels by night?" he demanded. "One can't pick and choose among camels by night."

"Then why do you propose it?"

"I?" cried the Cadi indignantly.

"Yes, you;" said the Caliph. "If you have no wish to trade camels by night why have you come straggling around in the dusk?"

The Cadi blinked, a little dazed, and looked up at the morning sky. Its dazzling light would have blinded an eagle.

"You are as mad as a hare!" said the Cadi.

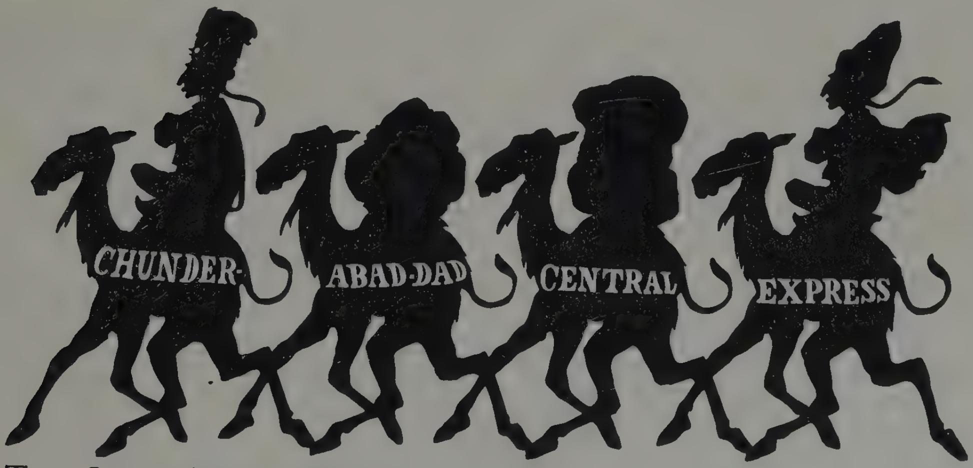
"And you are what's worse — an imbecile!" cried the Caliph angrily. "Go home, Ben Simul!" He slammed the door in the Cadi's face, went wrathfully into the house, consulted the clock, and sent everybody to bed.

XI

MEANTIME in Chunder-abad-dad things were going very badly.

It was very simple, the circular said. "Just set your sun-dial by the clock; go to bed and forget it. When you wake in the morning you'll be surprised to see what time it is!"

They were. It seemed rather dark when they woke. But it was



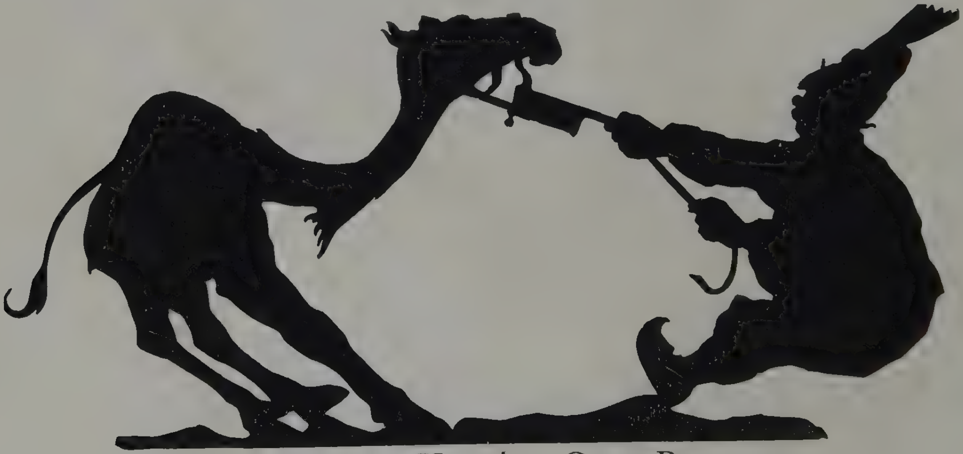
THE CAMEL TRAINS RUNNING BY STANDARD MESOPOTAMIAN TIME.

Sunday morning; and everyone always sleeps later on Sundays; so they all went to sleep again.

Yet hardly had they fallen asleep before a deep sound struck their ears. It was not the wind of the sirocco, nor the car rattling over the stony street. It was the call of the muezzins in the minarets, summoning the Faithful to noon-day prayer.

The astonished populace rose in haste, and chased the hours with flying feet. They chased them all day long.

Nobody knew just what time it was; and, apparently, when they did, it wasn't; which was rather confusing.



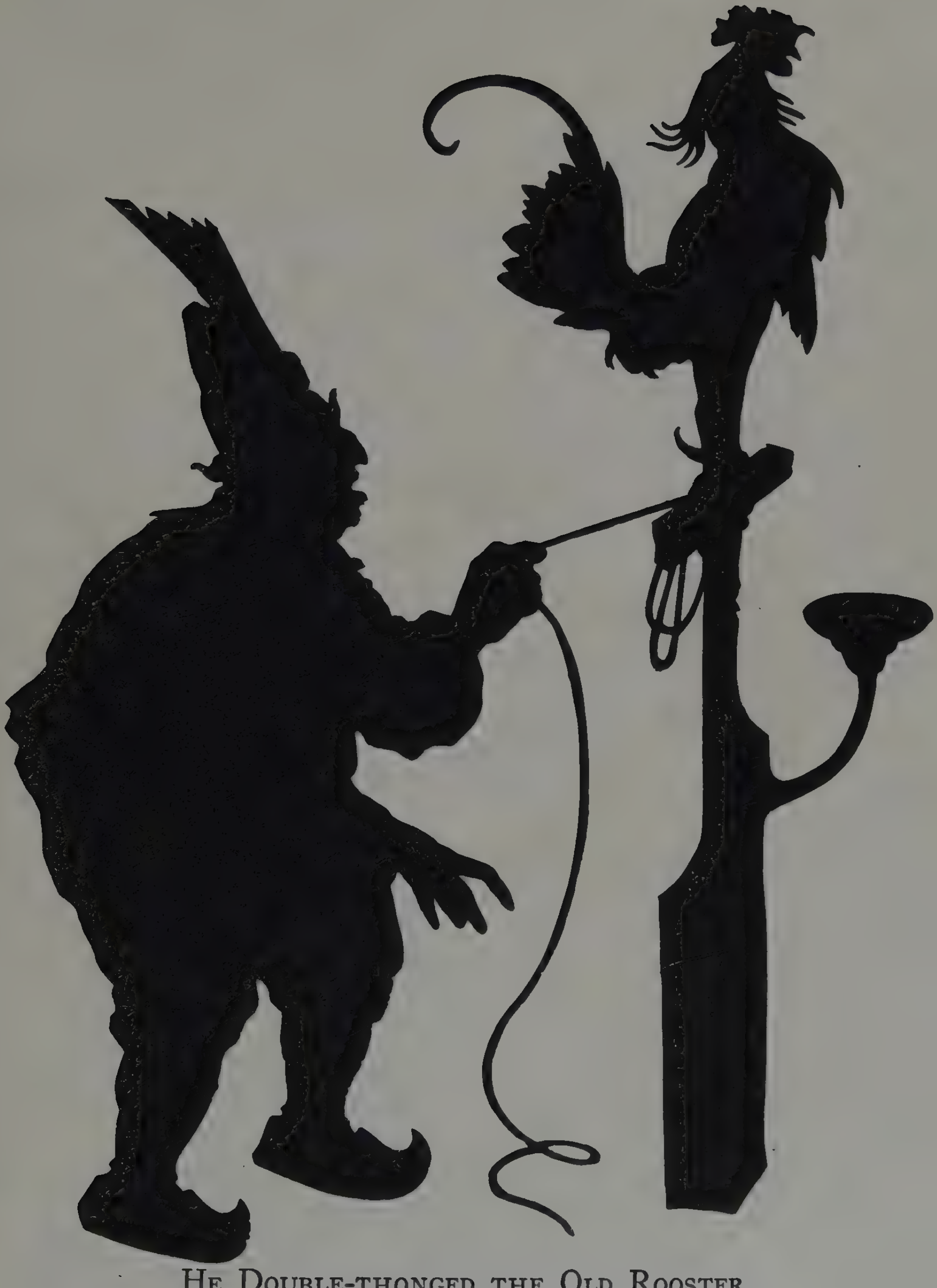
The Camels Had All Gone Balky.

In the city all made haste to obey. But some dials would run on the new time, and some would not, habit being too strong.

In the suburbs all was confusion.

The camel-trains were running by standard Mesopotamian time. The country was running by cock-crow, as it always had done. The big caravanserais outside the walls were running by common highway time, to keep pace with the camel-expresses. Nothing whatever agreed with the stage-coach, neither caravans nor camels.

Everything was tangled up; everyone was confused.



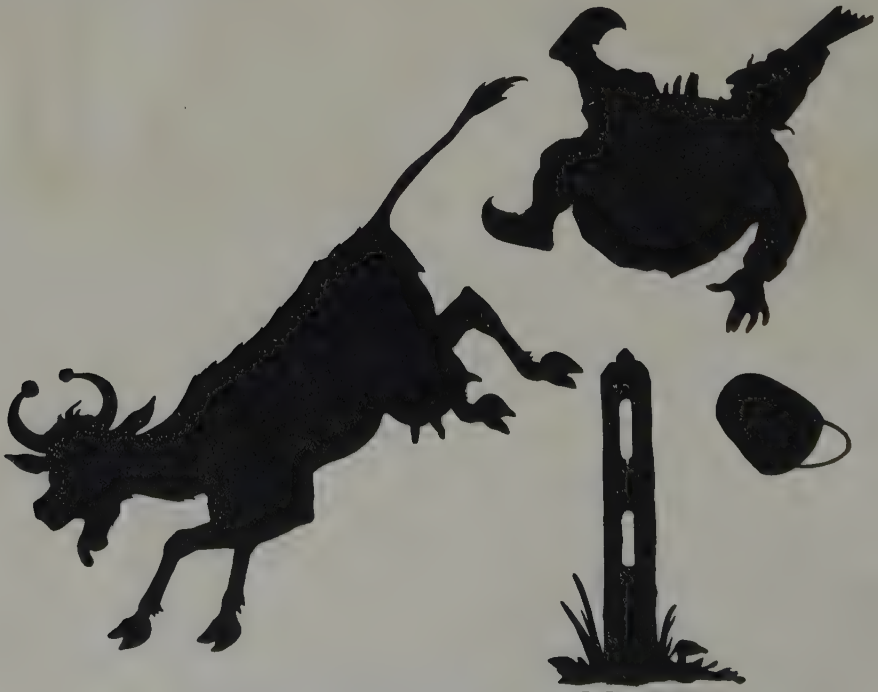
He Double-thonged the Old Rooster.

The Chro-no-log-ic-al Bureau was in a shirt of eleven yards revising the annual calendar to agree with the Caliph's clock. All that they revised, to-day, they had to revise again, to-morrow.

XII

THE unhappy Grand Vizir had lost all count of time. He could not have told for a great sum what day of the week or the month it was. He had given up knowing the hours.

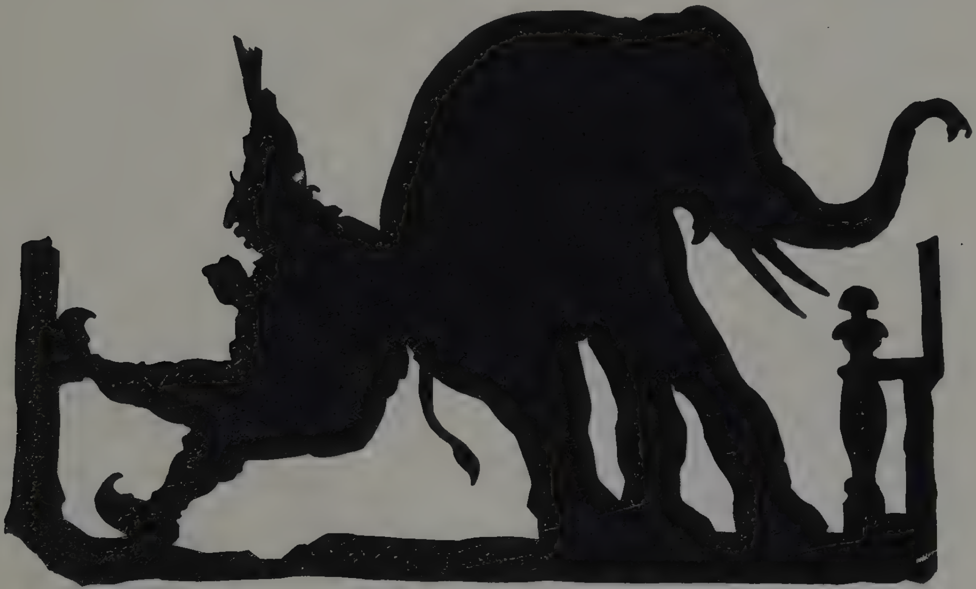
The Sun said it still was Tuesday noon when the clock said breakfast-time the next Sunday morning. And before twilight that day the Caliph and the Grand Vizir had eaten two luncheons, two dinners, two suppers, two breakfasts, a bed-time snack, and were preparing for breakfast once more.



The Kine Refused to be Milked.

The Vizir galloped to and fro; he came and went at a run; he went so fast that panting slaves toiled after him in vain.

He had taken to sleeping at the dining-room door for fear some unexpected meal might catch him out of bounds. He had neither time nor patience to lace his high leather buskins, but wore an old pair of Congress gaiters with loose elastic sides, into which he might plunge at a leap and be ready for anything.



THE ELEPHANTS REFUSED TO GO INTO THEIR STALLS.

The cows, horses, camels, asses, sheep, goats and elephants were in such a state of mind that they just sat about and bawled and brayed, squealed, grunted, and bellowed, whenever Selim hove in sight with his smoky lantern, salt-pan and goad. "Stuboy!" he cried. "It's none of my doings. Don't lay the blame on me!"

He tied the expostulating hens in rows on their roosts, and double-thonged the old rooster, who sat there defiantly, tied to the perch, but vociferously crowing.

The camels had all gone balky. The kine refused to be milked. The sheep and goats bawled incessantly. The elephants refused to go into their stalls. And the fowls, at last, when released from their perches, fled to the oases in disgust.

He could hardly get the beasts stabled before the Caliph cried "Take them back!" So to and fro, like a shuttle, between the oases and the barn they scurried, very like a circus-parade through the streets of a country town.

XIII

THE Caliph himself had grown so touchy no one dared even talk about TIME. To refer to TIME at all became a serious transgression.

The public story-tellers, who amused the common people with incredible romances, were forbidden to begin their narratives with *In the good old times.* Stories must begin, the Caliph said, without insinuating that any other time was better than this.

Four reduced gentlewomen who dwelt in a bye-street and made a precarious living by gossiping and knitting, were reported on suspicion, as having been heard to say that they had seen better days.

The Legislature was stirred to its depths; and did as most legislatures do when they meet an emergency.

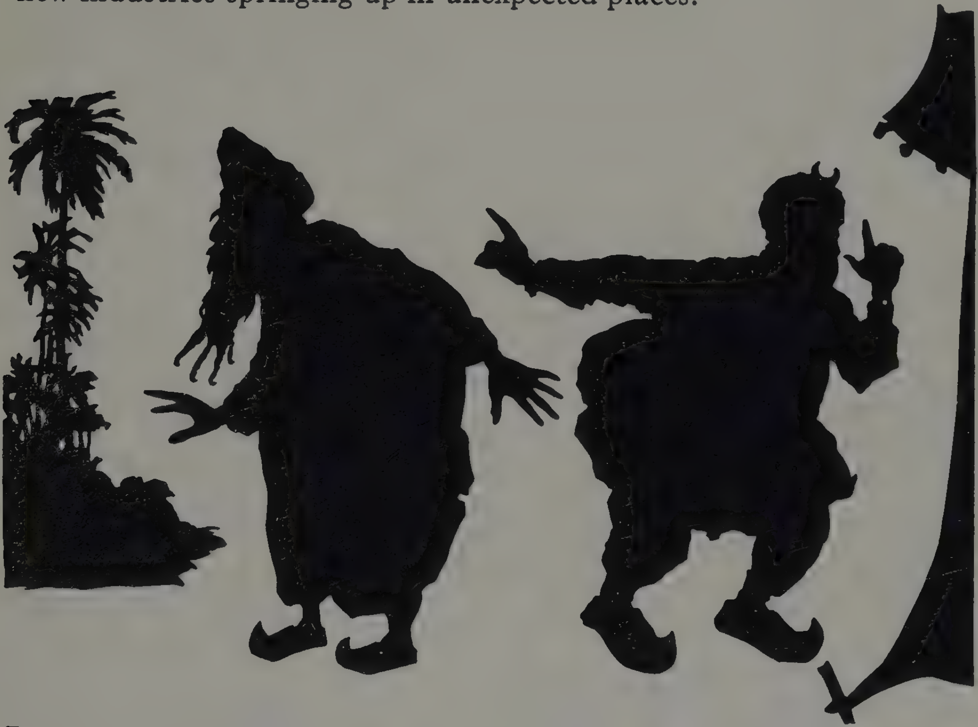
It passed a rigid ordinance which under heavy penalty forbade *Procrastination* from any more being *the thief of time* in children's copybooks; and struck from the public-school readers a passage which spoke of *the happy days of yore.* "From this time forth," said the statute, "*there shall be no more days of yore.*"

The house-maids now were rising so early in the morning that they had all the beds made before anyone else got up; which makes a singular difference, if one pauses to give it thought.

Out in the suburban oases on the border of the desert, dinner-bells were incessantly ringing; and behind the tents hid bewildered sheiks, cautiously peeping out to ask "Was that my bell; or yours?"

Hundreds of itinerant dial-setters, who had been old umbrella-men, went about the city crying: "Set your sun-dials for sixpence!" In fact all the old umbrella-men had become expert dial-setters.

"Thus," said the Caliph proudly, "with almost every hour we see new industries springing up in unexpected places."



Behind the Tents, Bewildered Sheiks Ask, "Was That My Bell or Yours?"

"How much industry resembles me!" sighed the Vizir wearily.

"Resembles you?" said the Caliph. "How?"

"By springing up, at every hour, in unexpected places!"

And now, the cheapest dials, which easily got out of order, were found as likely to be right as the most expensive sort. Dials which spun like teetotums had a tremendous sale; the wild ringing of alarm-dials kept up a perpetual din.

"It is just like poetry," said the Caliph, complacently rubbing his hands. "'Keeping time, time, time, in a sort of Runic rhyme, to the tintinnabulation of the bells!'"

"I never did like poetry," said the Vizir. "And I pointedly do not like that."

"No?" said the Caliph, haughtily. "Why not?"

"*It has three times in one place,*" said the Vizir: "And that's what ails Chunder-abad-dad!"

XIV

THUS, in extraordinary medley, time sped by in Chunder-abad-dad.

Days and nights ran round like water-beetles.

Meals followed one another like drops of spattering rain; hours fled by like the flying balls shot from a roman-candle.

Every hour it became more difficult to keep up with the Caliph's clock. Every day things steadily grew worse and worse.

The wood-larks, which had raised their carols in the myrtles of the town, withdrew dismayed to a quiet grove beyond the city wall.

The bulbul, which sang in the tamarisk-tree in the palace-yard, was so worn out with trying to keep up with the time, that he fell from the bough to the tiles below, where he lay mournfully piping faint wisps of song.

Yet Life was not without its bitter humor.

The palace gardener, in trying to learn how the busy bee improved each shining hour, was stung several times by the bee, and came in with his head all swelled up.

In the dead of the night, when the world was still and all lay wrapped in slumber, the palace household was roused from its repose by a blare of discord which made their ear-drums cringe.

"Put out those howling dervishes!" cried the Caliph to the Captain of the Guard.

"It is not the howling dervishes," replied the Captain of the

Guard. "It is the royal orchestra playing a serenade by daylight-saving time!"

Ding-dong! Ding-dong! Ding-dong! said the clock. "Arise!" cried the Caliph. "Arise, everyone, instantly!"

"Oh-h!" sighed the Grand Vizir as he scrambled into his clothes, "I feel like a fire-department."

"Fire-department?" said the Caliph.

"Yes . . . called out of bed at all hours of the night by the clang, clang, of a clock!"

At that the Caliph was angry. "Is this the reward of indulgence?" he cried. "To reap ingratitude, when I am doing everything to keep you up with the times?"

Debate was futile.

Selim staggered dizzily out, and collapsed under the shade of the sheltering palms.

XV

IN THE desert beyond the suburbs the sun came up and the sun went down in the good old-fashioned way; but the days and the nights in Chunder-abad-dad ran by the Caliph's clock.

Hurrying independently on, by a system of its own, the imperious time-piece disdained the sun and moon as too old-fashioned for respect.

Beyond the city, time continued to be controlled by the heavenly spheres; but in the city time was controlled by the clock.

Utterly regardless of the leisurely motion of the rest of the universe, the days in Chunder-abad-dad whirled by with ever-increasing speed.

"Live forever, Sun of Suns!" cried the Grand Vizir, and bowed until his head touched the butter. "But, thank Heaven!" he muttered under his breath as he sank into his cushions, "forever can't be very long with such a clock as that!"

XVI

FASTER and faster sped the clock, faster than it ever had run before.

Yet still the Caliph would not admit a hint that there could be anything wrong with the time-piece.

"Once and for all!" he thundered, violently wroth. "That clock cost forty zecchins of gold; and when a clock costs forty zecchins it stands to reason it's right!"

The Caliph had one of those firmly-convinced and serenely-oblivious natures. What he wished to believe to be true he believed without question; what he did not wish to believe he dismissed with an ironic pooh-pooh!

But Selim ben Selim, the Grand Vizir, was of an anxious disposition. He could see that Chunder-abad-dad's social program was disintegrating fast.

Just what Chunder-abad-dad's *social program* was had always been uncertain; but it was now quite certain, whatever it had or had not been, it was disintegrating fast.

This shook the dauntless courage of the Grand Vizir.

It shook the courage of the people of Chunder-abad-dad, too.

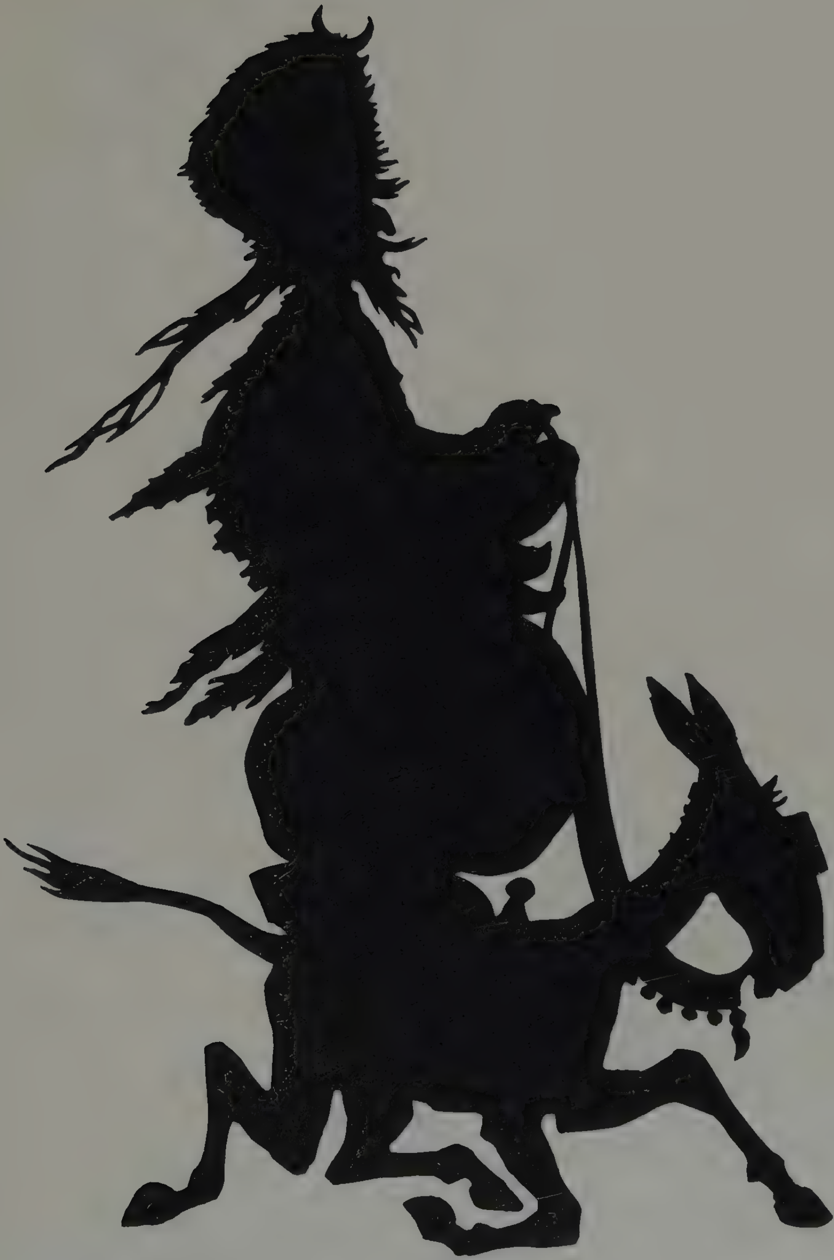
XVII

AROUND the city rose a strange, low, rumbling sound of discontented grumbling. It grew louder day by day.

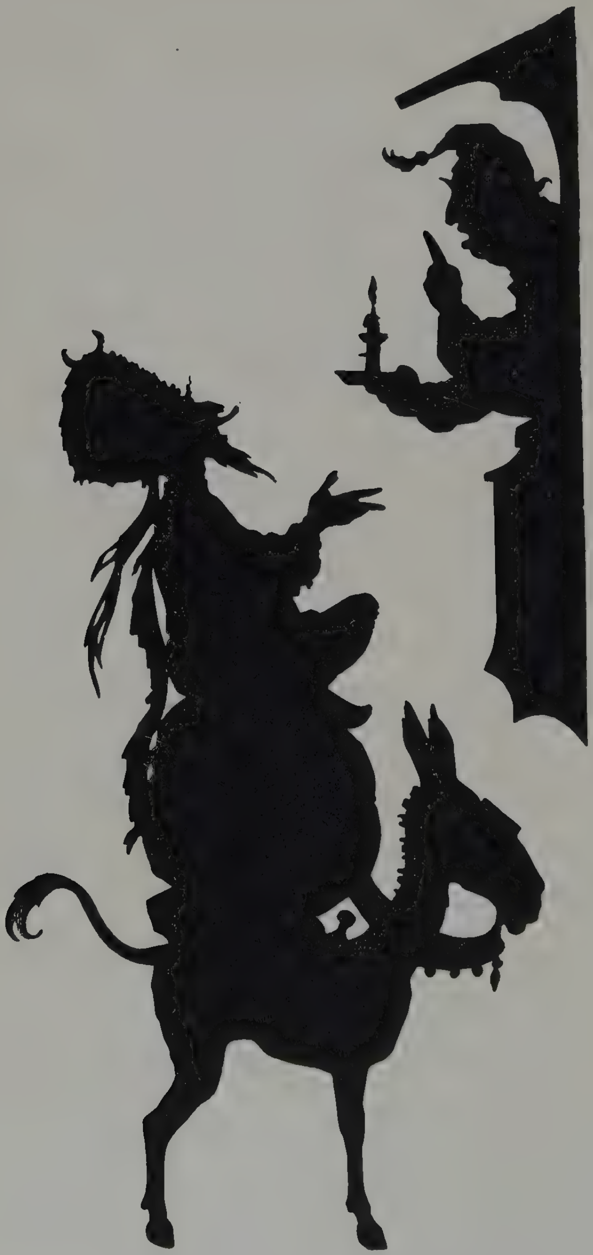
The city was filled with disorder; there were whispers of sedition; the police were consternated.

The stock-holders of the Water-Clock Company held a meeting in the street; their business was bankrupt, their president in prison. "Aoi!" they shouted bitterly. "It is going to be mid-winter in the middle of summer; nothing will grow; and who shall know seed-time from harvest?"

There was a parade of Indignant Mothers, whose husbands worked



Down the Great Road Came a Merchant with Merchandise



He Heard a Shutter Open.

for the camel-express, and whose children went to school. They did not know when or for which to serve meals; housekeeping was all upset.

The Crippled Beggars marched about with banners at their head, saying: "We Never Could Run by Any Time; We Will Not Try to Now!"

The lower sort of persons held a violent pleb-i-scite. They thought it was a riot; but it was a pleb-i-scite. They broke some windows, made a tremendous noise, and were most unpleasant indeed; not so much on account of the pleb-i-scite as that most of them needed a bath.

They held a referendum on keeping up with the times. But when the ballot was counted, it was found they had quite forgotten the question, and had voted, everyone of them, as to whether or not they should bathe. There were 248,580 against bathing; twelve and a half were for it.

So they turned their transparencies over, which said "Give Us Back Our Good Old Times!" and, painting on the other side "WE WILL NOT WASH!" they marched through the lower streets of the city, breaking the street-lamps, and shouting hoarsely, as is the habit of riots and pleb-i-scites.

Chunder-abad-dad seemed to be on the verge of a revolution. The situation appeared to be critical.

But strange things have happened in Chunder-abad-dad, and no doubt always will.

Worn out with perpetual hurry the Caliph and all the people fell into a deep sleep.

But the Grand Vizir in his anxiety lay restless as a cat.

XVIII

FROM Samarcand the trade-road ran down to Chunder-abad-dad like a wide white ribbon wandering through the dusty plain.

Down the great road came a merchant with merchandise for the bazaars.

When he came to the city its walls were deserted. He listened; but all he heard was a sound like a simoom in the distance; it was Chunder-abad-dad's people snoring together.

He pounded on the town-gates and shouted; but there came no reply. Opening the postern-gate he rode in through the deserted streets.

Over the minarets the noon streamed in a flood of light; yet all was still. Not a person was to be seen; not so much as a dog stirred in an alley.

Fear crept over him. "In the name of King Solomon's ant!" he cried. "Have I come to a city of the dead?"

The square before the palace lay empty in the sunshine. There was not even a beggar asleep by the gate. But he could hear the fountains babble. "In the name of Sheba's mule!" he cried. "Is anyone living here?"

He heard a shutter open high up in the wall.

He shaded his eyes and squinted up through the sunshine. He saw the head of the Grand Vizir protruding through a crevice.

"Ram of Ishmael!" he exclaimed.

"Hush!" said the Grand Vizir.

"What in the name of —"

"Hush! Hush, if you love your life!"

The merchant stared. "What has touched your wits?" he gasped in wonder.

"Are you the fool-killer?" asked the Grand Vizir hopefully.

"No," said the merchant, shaking his head.

"That is a pity," said the Grand Vizir. "If by any chance you should meet him, pray tell him he is needed in this city. On your honor, tell me, what time is it? When I ask what time, I mean what hour by Allah's time."

"High noon," said the stranger, marveling much.

"Are you deceiving me, friend?"

"Brother, if you cannot take my word for it, look at the sun. My mule stands with his four feet on his shadow but once in the day."

"What is the day of the week?"

"Friday."

"Friday?" whispered the Grand Vizir, his eyes popping. "You are not fooling me?"

"I have said. It is Friday."

"Are you sure it is Friday? See my gray hairs; I am an old man. Will you take an oath it is Friday?"

The merchant drew from his saddle-bags the Samarcand Gazette. He held it up to the Grand Vizir. "You may see the date for yourself."

"Bismillah!" gasped the Grand Vizir hoarsely. "I knew there was something wrong with that clock, or it wouldn't have kept a cuckoo! Friend, in the imbecile city of Chunder-abad-dad it is forty-two minutes past twelve o'clock come next Sunday night fortnight! We are two weeks ahead of the sun! Disaster befall that diabolical bird-in-a-box, the infamous clock of the infidel!"

"Clock?" said the merchant.

"Clock," said the Vizir.

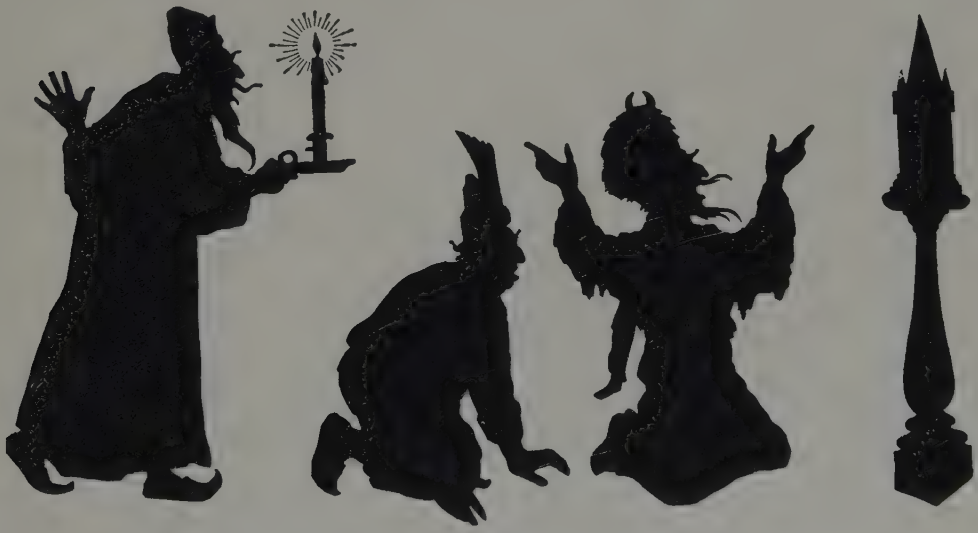
"Show me the thing," said the merchant.

With finger on lip, in tiptoed silence, the Grand Vizir led the merchant through the corridor into the court.

The Caliph's clock stood on its porphyry pedestal.

"There," said the Vizir bitterly, "is the perjured and profligate machine which has made this city mad! Someone joggled the al-mu-can-tar; all since has gone awry; and every time that infidel clock strikes it blasphemes the hours of Allah! Yet, if we could only un-joggle the al-mu-can-tar, I think everything still might come right."

At that moment the clock, which, travelling at breakneck speed, had accomplished a six weeks' journey in four weeks' time, ran down.



"A Miracle!" "A Miracle!"

The over-taxed main-spring relaxed with a whine. Something popped inside — whether it was the transmission, balance-lever, chain, starter, or escapement, who knows? . . . BING! it went . . . z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-ee-ee . . . spang . . . CHUCK!

With a tremendous whirr, suddenly ended, the clock-hands flew wildly round, once, twice, thrice; gave one feeble wave, trembled, and stood still. The hands were just at twelve. *The official clock had stopped!*

The two men stood aghast.

XIX

FROM his bed-room across the corridor came the Caliph's voice: "Selim! Selim!"

"Allah save you," gasped the merchant.

"Selim! Selim!" came the stern voice. "Answer me instantly. What are you doing? Have you presumed to lay impious hands upon my royal clock?"

The Grand Vizir clung to a pillar. His legs refused to support him. "Al-il-Allah!" was all he could say.

But the merchant of Samarcand was equal to the emergency. "A miracle," he roared, and fell on his knees. "Kneel!" he gasped to the Vizir. "Kneel, if you value your neck! And shout 'A miracle!'"

"A miracle! A miracle!" shouted the Vizir, as he dropped to his knees. "But I don't know what it is."

"Bellow!" whispered the merchant; "Louder and louder!" And they bellowed lustily together.

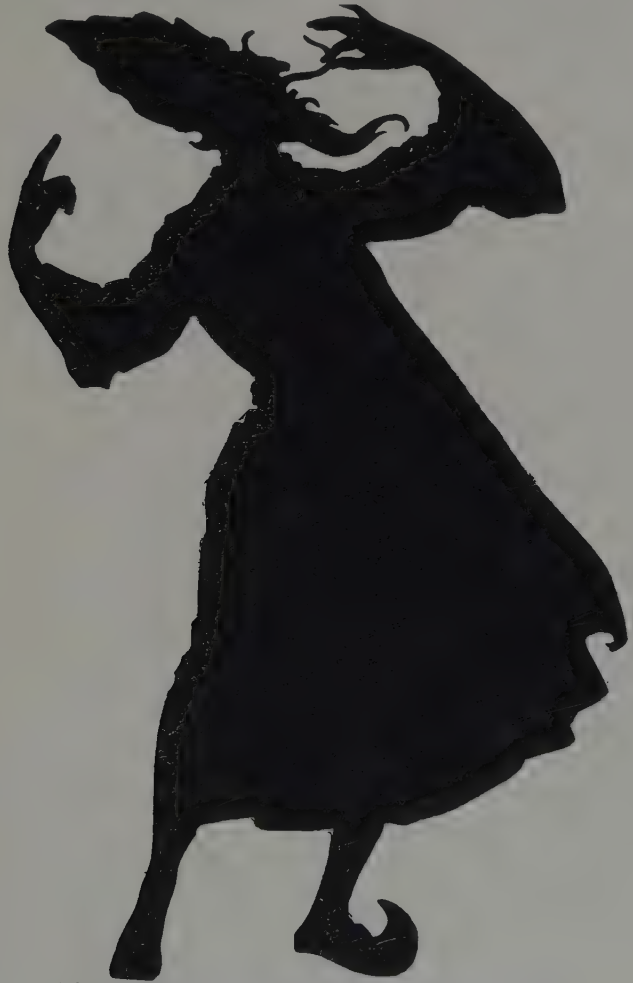
The Caliph appeared in his doorway. There was unappeasable wrath in his eyes. He stood a moment speechless, candle in hand, staring at the spectacle before him.

"A miracle!" bellowed the Grand Vizir. "A miracle!" shouted the merchant.

"A miracle?" said the Caliph. "A plague on you both! 'Twill be a miracle if I don't have you both bow-strung for waking me in the dead of night with this infernal din. Hassan! Bring me the bowstring!"

But ever the Vizir and the merchant continued to cry "A miracle!"

"Where?" said the Caliph stormily. "And what, is this miracle?"



The Caliph Assumed a Few Airs,
Swaggered and Twisted His Moustache.

"That an infidel clock should acknowledge the truth," cried the merchant, "and cease running with its hands uplifted forever in praise, at the hour of prayer!"

"Cease running? My clock?" cried the Caliph. He threw a glance at the Grand Vizir which made Selim's heart stop beating.

Yet back of that glance was the uneasy look of a heart that is also guilty; for the Caliph himself had been so busy keeping up with the clock, that he had forgotten for three days to pray.

"But Glory to the Caliph, Commander of the Faithful! Let the hours give testimony! Great is the Caliph! Our Caliph is mighty!" cried the merchant ecstatically.

"In his hands he holds the hours as one gathers loose sand in a bowl. He commands the darkness to pass, and it passes. He says 'The day comes!' and it cometh. He gathers the daylight into a bag, and presents the superfluous time to his people. *Allah hu akbar!* Our Caliph is mighty!"

The Caliph now began to feel as if he had done something out of the ordinary; as, indeed, he had. He assumed a few airs, he swaggered, and began to twist his moustache.

"Behold!" cried the merchant. "He has handled the hours as the cleverest infidels do, apportioning forth the day and the night, and permitting the sun, moon and stars to go about their business."

"Yes," said the Caliph, modestly. "That is the fact, though, perhaps, not yet universally known."

"Thanks be to Allah!" said the merchant, hardly pausing for breath. "The Faithful are not as the time-driven infidel, who hath harnessed his days to the wheels of confusion, and apportioned his nights to unrest!"

"That's the truth!" cried the Grand Vizir, fervently. "I was never before so confused in my life, or had so little rest."

"And, behold!" continued the merchant, glibly. "While the Mighty slept, Time, released from his maintenance, came to a stop; the Wheels of the Hours stood still. The Caliph slept; and while he slept the calendar caught up again with the clock. Hail to the Controller of Calendars! The sun, moon and stars are his servants; the seasons are his toys!"

The Caliph smiled. He loved to hear mild praise of himself. "This is a wise man," he said.

"Verily," continued the merchant, "He hath laid up fourteen days in his treasury as a penurious man would lay up pence. Through his exalted genius the city of Chunder-abad-dad is a fortnight ahead of the sun! Great minds are always ahead of their times!"

"Ah-h!" said the Caliph. "This is a very wise man! He understands me perfectly. Where is your comprehension, Selim, that you have not long ago perceived the wisdom of my course?"

"And now," said the merchant, and waved at the clock, "the crafty machine of the infidel confesses the truth: there is no time but Allah's. The hours kept by infidel clocks may be good for infidels. But, for the Faithful, Allah made the unhurrying day, and gave it in charge of the sun, moon and stars, out of reach of meddling infidel hands."

"This is a very wise man," said the Caliph. "A very wise man, indeed."

"Allah gave all eternity to the Faithful, that they need never make haste. But Satan made *Time* for the infidel who thereupon built him a clock to drive himself to destruction."

"Merchant!" said the Caliph, admiringly. "If you *are* a merchant, being so wise . . . where do you hail from, and what is your name?"

"My name is Gaifar of Samarcand, called Gaifar the Shrewd, son of Abdullah the Just, nephew to the Seven Solons, son of a seventh son. I was born both lucky and wise."

"It is, indeed, well to be born wise," said the Caliph.

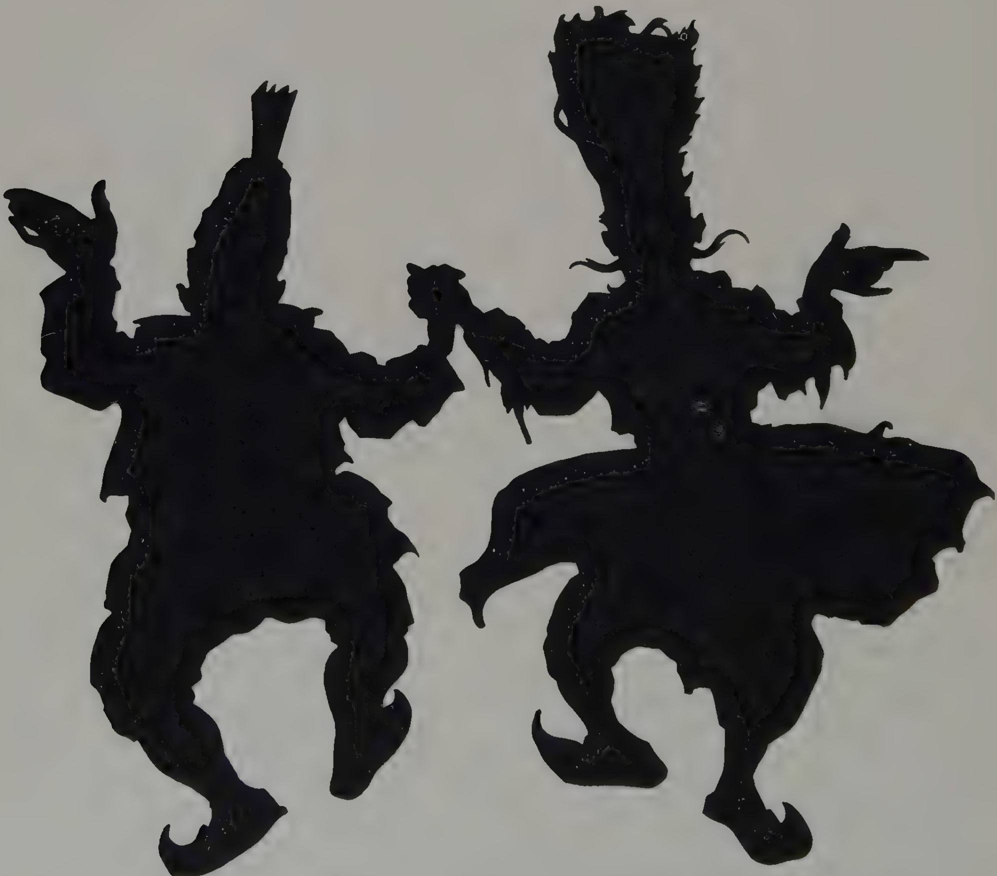
"It is better to be born lucky," said the Grand Vizir.

"It is best to be both," said the merchant.

"I have need of a lucky wise man," said the Caliph. "My counsellors have always been stupid, and my wise men unfortunate. In times of trouble and perplexity they have always lost their heads. Selim here has never had wit enough to make a fatal mistake."

"For which I thank Allah!" said Selim.

"Now," said the Caliph, and drew himself up pompously to the utmost of his height. "I have had enough of trying to keep up with the times; I shall never hurry again. I shall set my Great Dial by the sun, moon and stars, and await with tranquillity the judgment of Allah. You shall be Chief Astronomer; you shall sit second at table."



"WE HAVE UNJOGGLED THE AL-MU-CAN-TAR!"

"There goes my helping of batter-cakes!" murmured Selim, ruefully. "Plague take my unlucky stars!"

"Far better thank them," said the Caliph warmly, "that great affairs do not depend upon you. Think what a mess you would have made!"

XX

THEN the Caliph sent forth a proclamation, saying:

"In the name of the Prophet! I, Sulieman the Magnificent, Caliph of Chunder-abad-dad, have saved two weeks, which otherwise would have been wasted in sheer frivolity, and return them as a gift to my people, that they may live them over . . . That those who did ill may do well; that those who did well may do better."

"And," said the Grand Vizir, softly kicking the shins of the Chief Astronomer, "that those who did nothing may do even less."

"I have a vacancy in my cabinet which I should very much like to fill," said the Caliph, musing on Government.

"I have a vacancy, too," said Selim. "But not in my cabinet. I should very much like to fill it. Let us go in, and eat our next meal, whichever it may be! There goes the gong!"

So they all went in together, the merchant and the Grand Vizir hand-in-hand, singing at the tops of their voices:

"On Monday I got up at night,
And dressed by yellow candle-light;
On Tuesday, quite the other way,
I had to go to bed by day!

BUT: (*now, everybody sing!*)

We have unjoggled the al-mu-can-tar!
The al-mu-can-tar! The al-mu-can-tar!
And we are so happy with things as they are
That we never will change them again!"

MORAL

MY young friend, if you ever should come to Chunder-abad-dad you will find a city where everyone is idle and happy, doing just as he pleases; where no one ever hurries, yet the world goes very well.

It is a happy, happy city. They do not know what day of the month it is, nor what the day of the week; and they do not care to know.

Watches and clocks are unknown; even sun-dials are mistrusted, and noon-marks are regarded with suspicion.

They have learned through bitter experience, in that happy community, that haste is a pitiful substitute for happiness.

Over the gateways of the palace, deeply carved in the enduring stone, are bits of infinite wisdom for the guidance of the people: at one, " The Knowledge of Time is the Beginning of Trouble! " at another, " A Quiet Hour of Ancient Faith is Worth an Age of Restless Reason."

And carved in the everlasting rock around the sun-dial's foot: " He that Believeth Shall Not Make Haste! My Brother, Why Do You Hurry? "

The village gunsmith somehow repaired the Caliph's clock to play one tune out of twelve. From the broken measures of " Don't You Cry for Me! " and " The Light of Other Days," he composed a plaintive Persian version of " Carry Me Back to Old Virginia," of which the Caliph was extravagantly fond.

And there, in the middle of the palace courtyard, as a warning and an example, stands that ancient Yankee time-piece, plaintively playing, from time to time, through the years, " Carry Me Back to Old Virginia! "

But no one has ever carried it back.

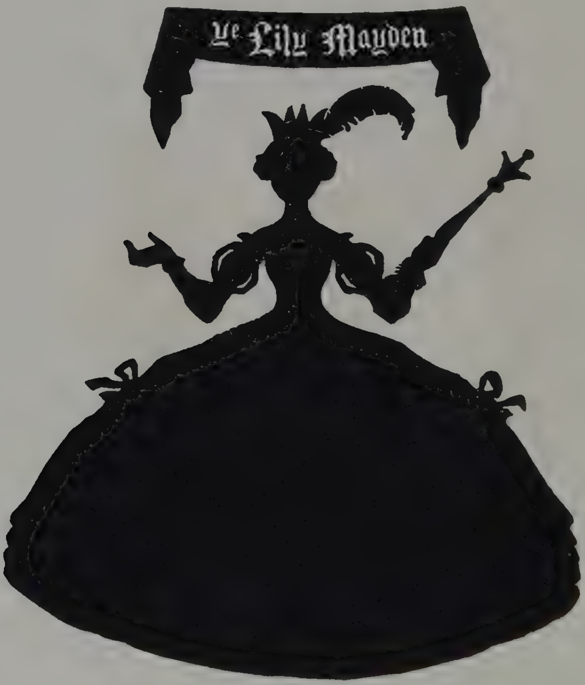
Ye Very Ancient Ballad of Ye Lily Mayden and Ye Lyttel Taylor-Boye.

Canto One

ONCE, on a merry summer's day,
Beneath the greenwood tree,
There stood a moated castle
By a long-forgotten sea,
Where dwelt a lovely Lily Maid,
Young and divinely fair:
She was a waxen figure
In a dime museum there.

Of wax her little double chin;
Of wax her rosy cheek;
Of wax her parted, laughing lips
That almost seemed to speak;
And, oh! she was so beautiful
That though one's heart were ice,
To be on earth near her was worth
The whole admission-price.

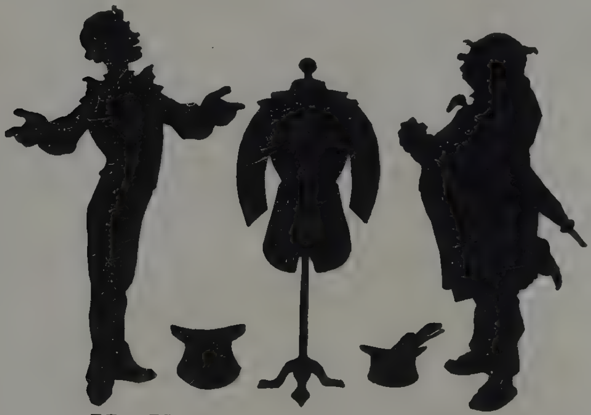
A Princess she of royal line
  Without the least alloy,
Yet in her little waxen heart
  She loved a Tailor Boy
Who kept a little clothing-store
  Down in a dingy street,
And retailed ancient gabardines
  In styles quite obsolete.



This Tailor loved the Lily Maid —
  She was his guiding star!
He went to every matinee,
  And worshiped from afar.
She looked at him; he looked at her;
  Their courtship ended there:

The Princess could not speak her love;
  The Tailor did not dare.

And so the days went gliding by
  The livelong summer through;
The sun came up, the sun went down,
  As it is apt to do.
There came no clouds across the sky
  To mar the peaceful blue;
But there was trouble brewing
  Just as troubles always brew.

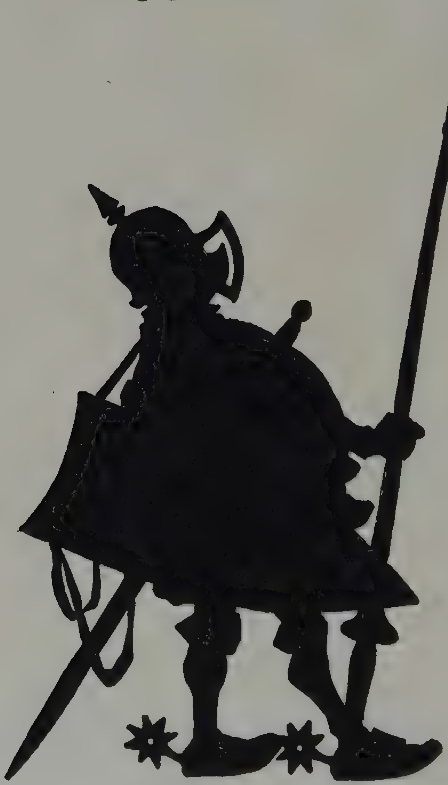


HE KEPT A LITTLE CLOTHING-STORE.

Canto Two

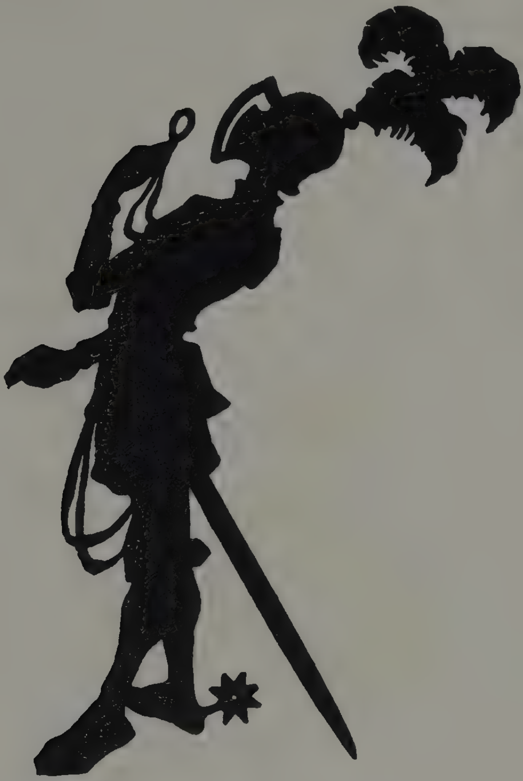
Two Robber Barons, stuffed with straw,
  In that museum stood,
Within a gloomy pasteboard cave,
  Deep in a painted wood.
With burnished armor made of tin,
  And broadswords made of lath,
They frowned upon the scenery,
  And bottled up their wrath.

For they despised the Tailor Boy
Who loved the Lily Maid,
And turned their haughty noses up
At folks who are in trade;
And held themselves so very high
That when they strutted round
They hardly ever touched the earth
Except on rising ground.

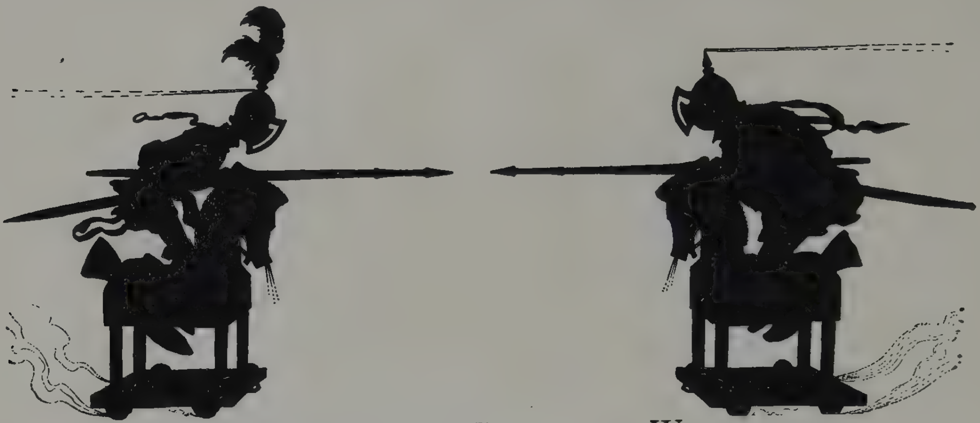


Mynheer Jan van der Swannigan,
Of high descent was he;
His father peddled pepper-pots
Along the Zuyder Zee.

Sir Launcelot de Id-i-otte
Of race was so refined,
In all the strain there was not brain
Enough to make one mind.



Both madly loved the Lily Maid,
And better to decoy
The other from her, each reviled
The little Tailor Boy;
And vowed a most tremendous vow,
By the great Google Tree,
Next matinee they would him slay,
And so re-veng-ed be.

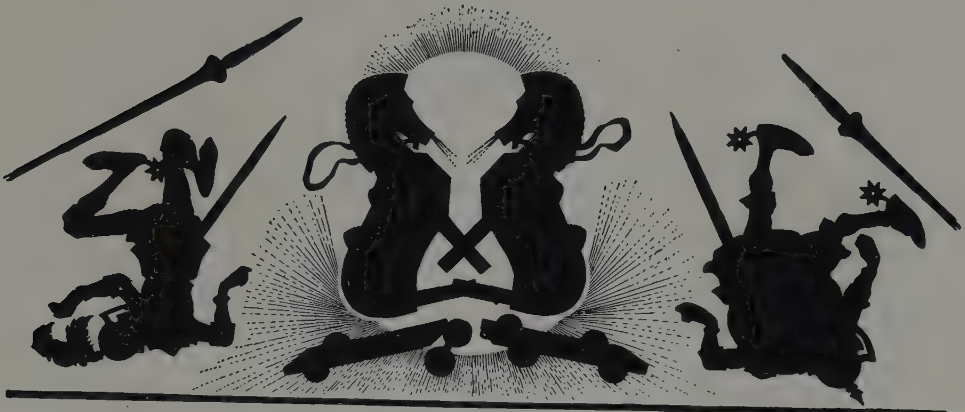


THEY HURTLED DOWN THE WIND.

Canto Three

But two proud noses, turning up,
  Oft turn each other down;
And foul blows sped at honest head
  Oft crack each other's crown.
"Sir Launcelot," quoth Mynheer Jan,
  While his mustache he twirled,
"My true love is the fairest maid
  In all the wide, wide world."

"Not so, I wot," cried Launcelot;
  "Herr Jan, that cannot be;
For be she fair to thee, I swear
  She is more fair to me."
"Now if to be less fair to me
  Doth hint a covert slur,"
Cried Jan, "thou art a craven
  And a common cockle-bur!"

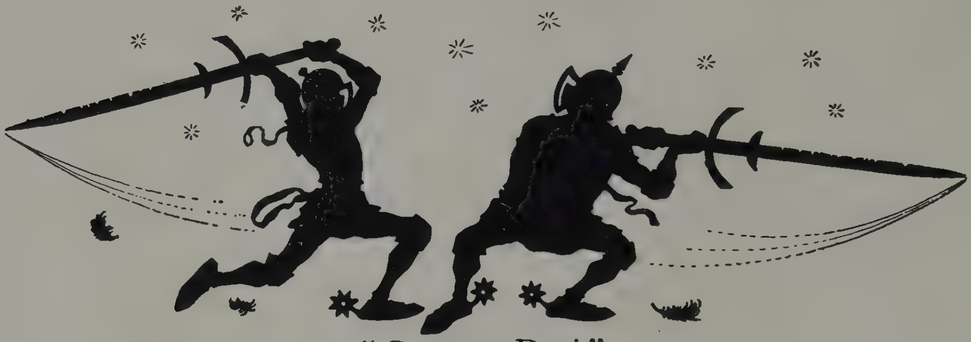


THEY CLANGED TOGETHER WITH A BANG!

"A cockle-bur?" cried Launcelot,
With fury in his eye.
"Thou painted waxen jig-a-bob,
Apologize or die!"
With which he launched a swinging blow
That touched a tender spot;
Whereat Herr Jan straightway began
To thump Sir Launcelot.

Canto Four

Soon each for lack of breath gave back,
And sprang upon his horse,
Girt up his gear and couched his spear
To lay his foe a corse;
And with mad roars, like two wild boars,
They hurtled down the wind;
So swiftly, too, their good steeds flew
They left their tails behind.
They clanged together with a bang
Like some tremendous drum!

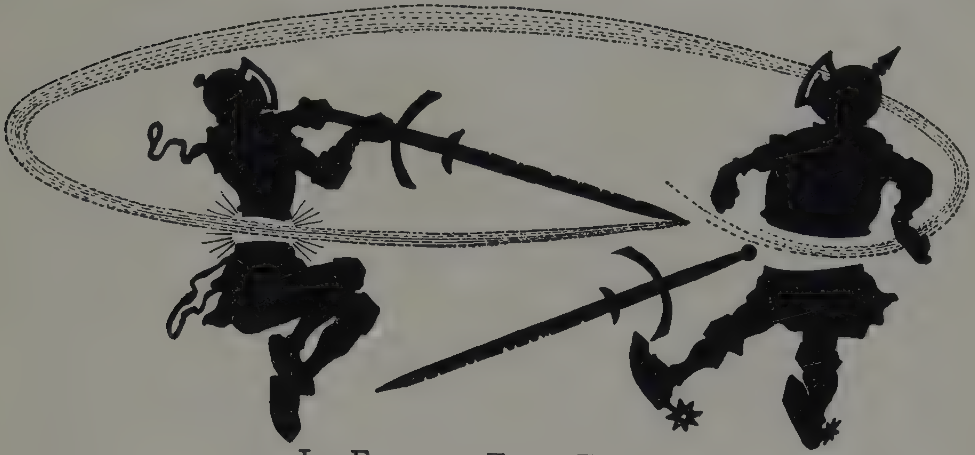


"CAITIFF, DIE!"

Their good steeds sat down suddenly,
And wished they had not come.
Their spears were split to kindling-wood;
And, oh, their heads did sing!
If any welkin had been there,
They would have made it ring.

But up got then those doughty men
From out the clouds of dust,
And drew their swords, whereat their steeds
Departed in disgust;
And all the view grew sulphur-blue
With "Caitiff, die!" and such
Irate back-handed compliments
In medieval Dutch.

Till, waxing hot, Sir Launcelot
In fearful fury flew,
And at his foe let fly a blow
That clave Herr Jan in two,
And circled round with fearsome sound
And such tremendous vim,

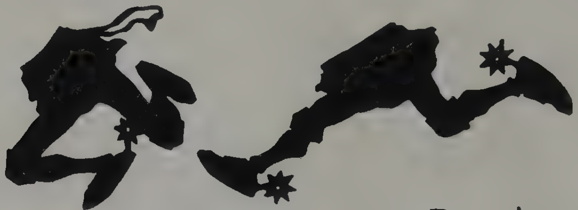


In Fearful Fury Flew.

It caught the hot Sir Launcelot
  And did the same for him!

And as the white dust settled down
  Upon that luckless pair,
Their legs jumped up and ran away,
  And left them sitting there.
"Hold, hold!" cried both; "our legs are gone;
  We can no longer fight,
Since we are four feet shorter
  Than we ought to be by right!

"And, see! our legs have lost their heads
  And taken to their heels!
Instead of only two feet off,
  Good lack! a glance reveals
They are a half a mile away;
  And since we cannot stand
Without our feet, we surely have
  An awkward job on hand!"



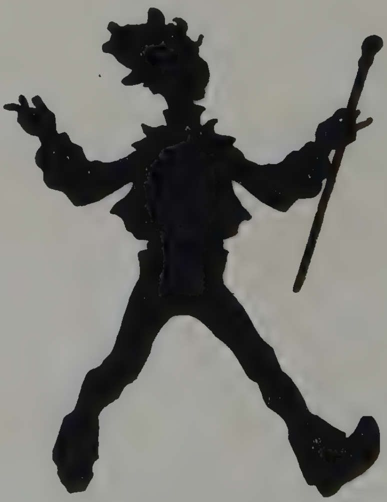
THEIR LEGS JUMPED UP AND RAN AWAY.

Canto Five

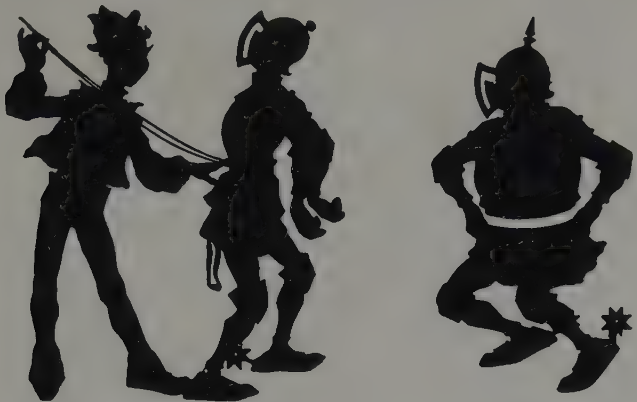
Just then the little Tailor Boy
  Came dancing down the way,
In Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes,
  Unto the matinee.
" A boon, brave Tailor Boy," they cried —
  " A boon we crave of thee! "
The Tailor winked the other eye —
  " I'm out of boons," quoth he.

But by the Lily Maid they prayed,
  And all the almanac,
Until in haste their legs he chased,
  And brought them prancing back.
Then with a beeswaxed basting-thread
  He sewed them round and round,
And with his little needle stitched
  Till they were safe and sound.

Then laughed the Tailor merrily.
  " Most noble sirs, i'feggs,
Ye are the biggest wooden-heads
  That ever stood on legs;
For had ye but exhibited
  As legless twins," quoth he,
" Ye would have made more money
  Than the double Siamee! "

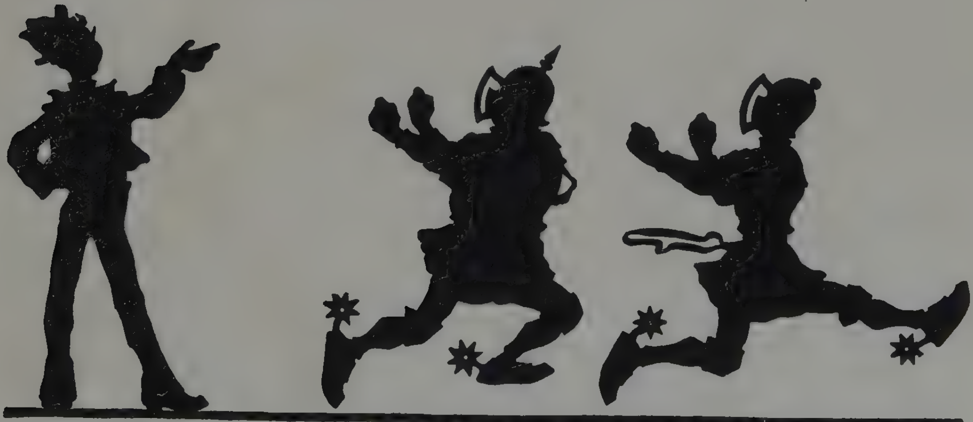


" I'M OUT OF BOONS,"
QUOTH HE.



He Sewed Them Round and Round.

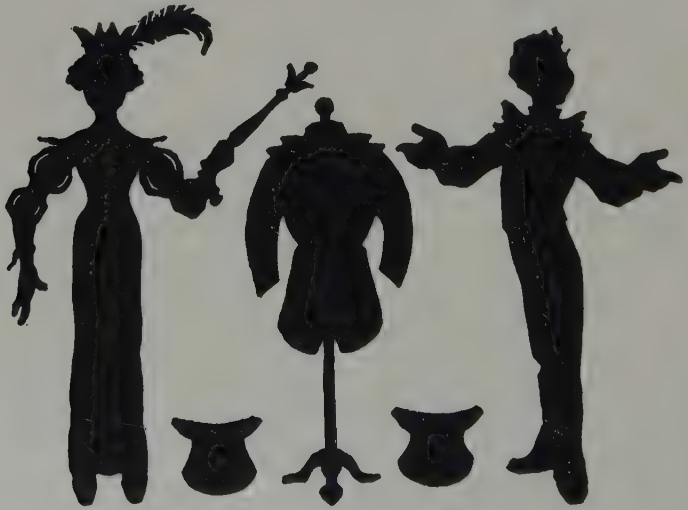
But he who saves such traitor knaves
   Saves vipers to destroy
Himself; for at these words they sought
   To slay the Tailor Boy.
But when the Tailor mended them,
   The armor which they wore
So fooled him that he sewed their legs
   On after-part before.



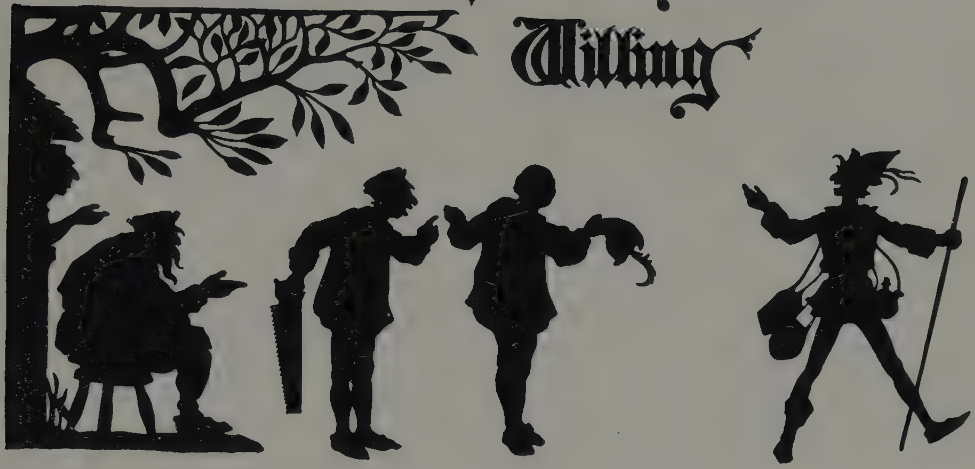
The More They Tried to Come His Way Their Legs Went Leaping T'other.

And when the villains sprang at him, —
  Turned this way and the other,—
The more they tried to come his way
  Their legs went leaping t'other.
"Come on!" cried heads, "Come off!" cried legs,
  As down the road they flew;
And what became of those two knaves
  Nobody ever knew.

But the lovely Lily Maiden,
  To her everlasting joy,
Was purchased for a dummy
  By the little Tailor Boy;
And standeth in the window
  In the dingy little street,
Among the ancient vestments
  Cut in fashions obsolete,
With all her peerless beauty
  And aristocratic air,
Although her crown and gaudy gown
  Are much the worse for wear.



The Story of the Fool who was Willing



"Mind you, it's the fools who do the work of the world, and the wise who profit. So you may choose." — Maurice Hewlett

ONCE on a time there lived a man who had three sons whose livelihood gave him much concern; for, although two were cleverer than ordinary, the third was a born fool.

The first he apprenticed to a Hatter, who, shortly after, went mad, as is the habit of Hatters, and left the son master of the business.

The second son, who was cross-eyed, he apprenticed to a carpenter, who saw in him great opportunities: since, if he sawed and hammered where he looked, it would take him a long time to complete his apprenticeship; thus his master would have double the use of his services.

But the cross-eyed son was clever. He shut one eye when he worked. Thus, seeing straighter than his companions, he sawed better, and had less to distract him; so he got through his apprenticeship in half the time the others did, and was soon master of a large business, which he greatly increased by looking out for advantages with one eye while he improved opportunities with the other.

But the foolish son, whose name was Willing, drove his parents to despair. He was suited to no trade whatever. His wits were too much twisted to have any natural practical bent, and he was too frail of body for hard manual labor. He was too heavy for light work, and too light for heavy work; and so was fit for none.

He was, consequently, treated without consideration; until, at last, weary of receiving only blows and neglect, he begged to be allowed to go out into the world to seek his fortune.

"Let him go!" said the two brothers.

"But which way shall he turn?" asked the father.

"Oh, a fool's road is easy to find," replied the two brothers.

"What will he need for his journey?" asked the mother, who, though with tongue and hand she abused the fool, pitied him.

"Little enough!" said he, and laughed, as a fool was far more apt to do than one in his sober senses: "One whom good fortune has passed must run fast to overtake it. I have no wish for a heavy load."

So she gave him a rancid cheese, a loaf of stale bread, a bottle of wine too sour for drinking, and three-pence, because three-pence was too small to purchase anything in that country; and the fool went his way.

He travelled a great distance, over mountain and moor, through far valleys into all the old countries of Wisdom; but found no occupation. All were busily engaged in the pursuit of Fortune, and took no time for Folly; none but the wise and crafty throve; and, had not Providence looked after the fools, they all, without doubt, would miserably have perished.

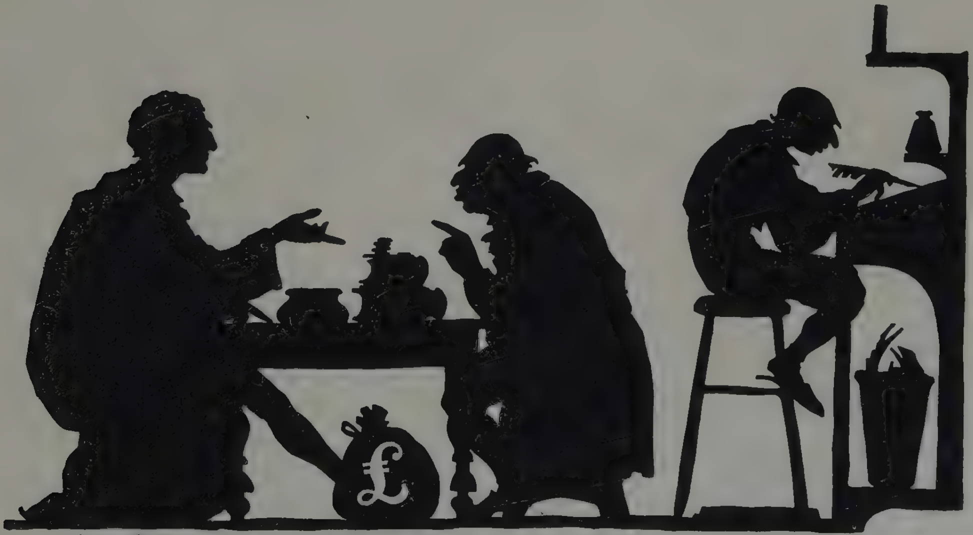
At last, having found no help in the practical world, he came to the edge of an impractical land beyond the borders of which Wise Men never had ventured, where all was uncertain, nothing known with assurance, and where none but a fool would go. So he went.

He travelled a thousand leagues along a strange and winding road, without a single adventure, until, as he climbed a steep hill in the midst of a dusty waste, he met a gilded coach, with twelve horses drawing at a gallop, with outriders, postillions, and footmen, couriers, guards, and dragoons, handsomely attired in scarlet and gold, who shouted, and drove at a tremendous pace, urging the horses with long-handled whips. "Get out of the way!" they shouted, and came thundering down the hill.

The fool could not make up his little bit of a mind which way to leap. "If I leap to the left side that certainly is not the right side; and the right side may be the wrong side!" So he stood motionless, puzzled; and, while thus debating, he was knocked down by the galloping horses, run over by the flying wheels of the coach, and left lying in the road.

An outrider roared at him: "Who are you that obstruct the King's highway? Had I time to stop I would beat you. But I must go galloping on, whoever you may be."

"I am Willing," said the fool.

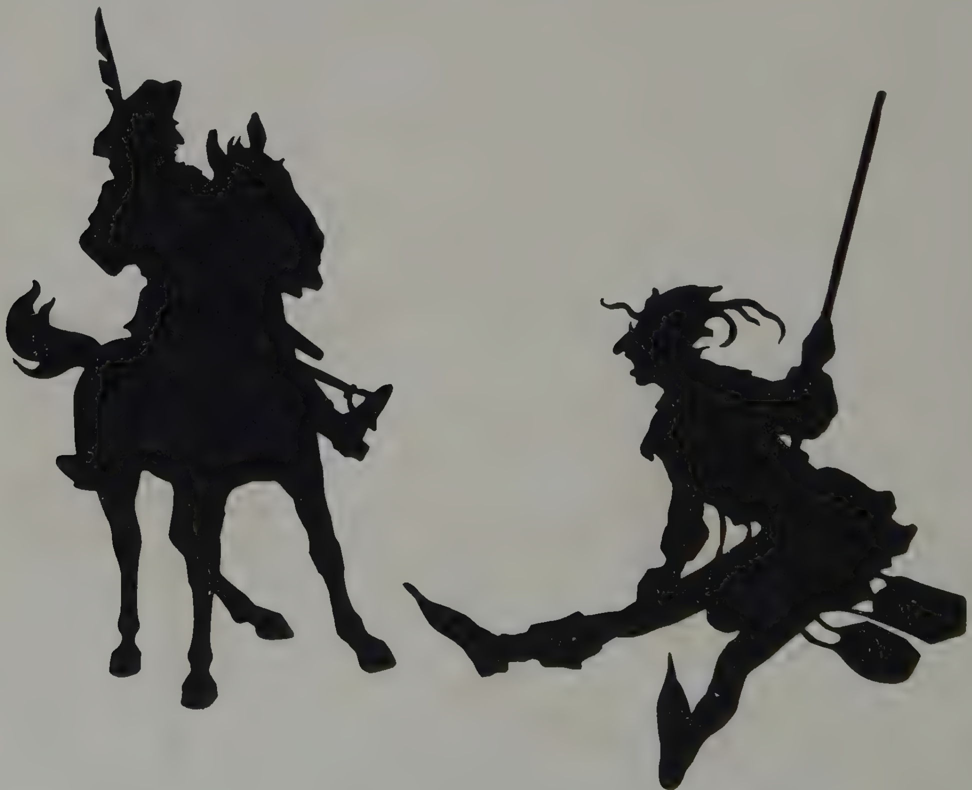


ALL WERE BUSILY ENGAGED IN THE PURSUIT OF FORTUNE.

"Odds-todds!" cried the outrider, galloping on. "What good-nature!"

Two leagues farther on, at the turn of the road, stood a beggar whose feet went an opposite way to his face. "Name of Mercy!" he said. "Who are you? You that have a whole loaf of bread when better men are starving? Who are you?" he cried bitterly. "Give me the loaf!"

"I am Willing," replied the fool; so he gave him the bread; and, since the cheese was too rancid to be eaten without bread, he gave him the cheese also; then went on his way, light-heartedly tossing his staff in the air, that he had so much less to carry.



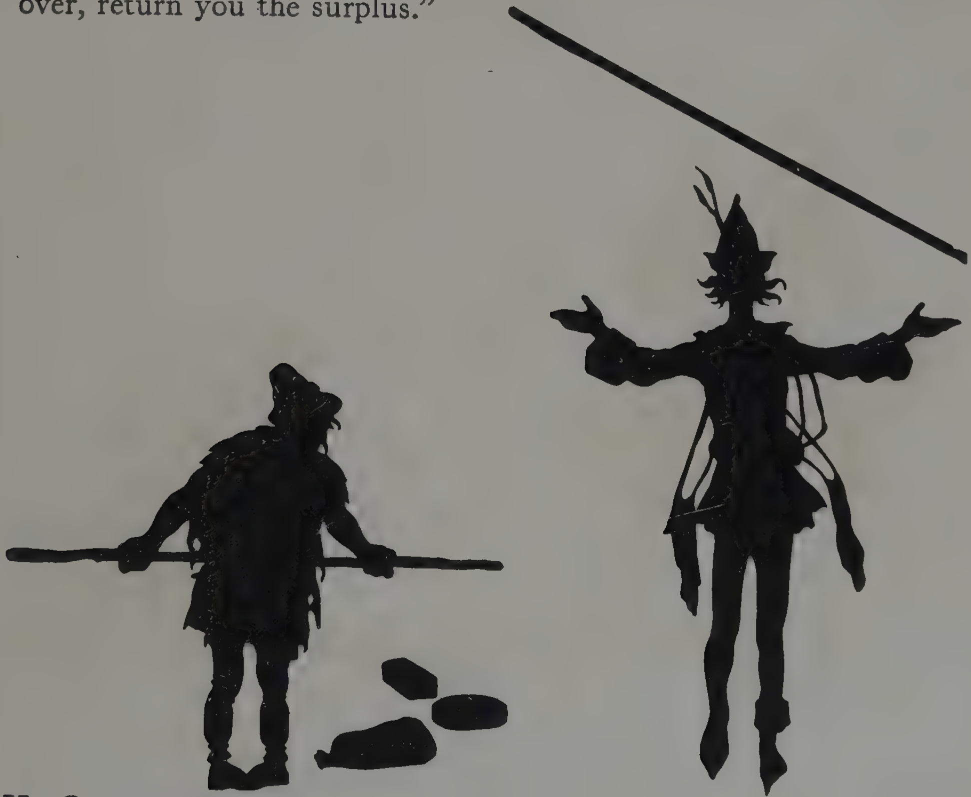
"Who Are You That Obstruct the King's Highway?"

Before him stretched a mighty wood which darkened all the earth and swallowed up the roadway. Here, where a wiser man might have been wary, the fool trudged merrily on.

Within the wood were howlings of wild beasts, shrieks of strange birds, the murmur of a rising storm, a most unhappy tumult. All this meant nothing to the fool, who listened, and laughed at the uproar.

At the verge of the forest three robbers waylaid him.

"Who goes there?" they cried. "Halt; and account to us for whatever money you have. If it be too much for one, we will take it, employ it in our business, keep an account, and, when our trading is over, return you the surplus."



He Gave the Beggar the Bread and Cheese, and Went on His Way, Tossing His Staff in the Air.

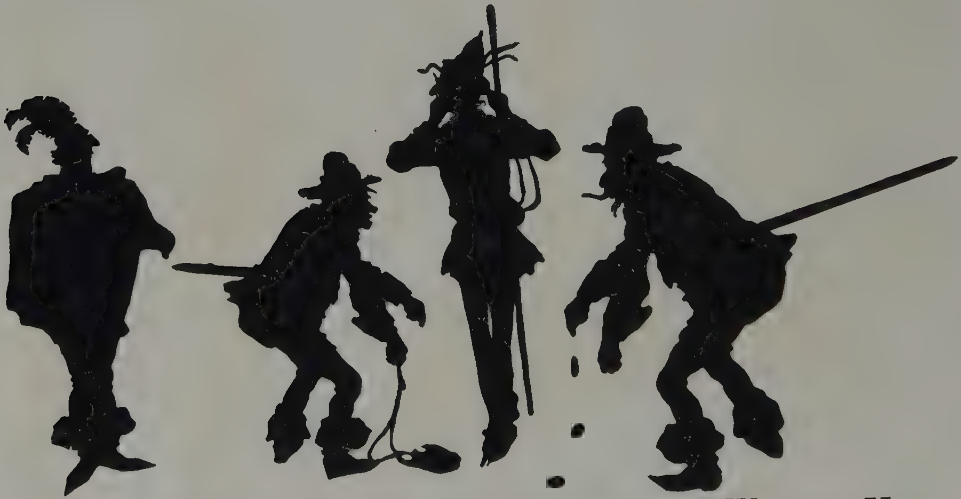
"I am Willing," replied the fool. They, thereupon, searching him, discovered his three-pence, of which each took a penny. "There is one for each of our firm," they said, "and none left for you."

"I am Willing," he said; so they kept them. And the fool passed on.

In the darkest part of the uncertain wood he came upon a lone woodman, standing gloomily in the vast solitude, who, seeing that he carried a bottle, cried, "Brother, give me your bottle of wine, that I may march with you through this uncertain wood."

"I am Willing," said the fool. So the woodman walked with him through the wood; and the simpleton gave him the wine. "I have learned this much," he said, "while travelling the world: a man, alone in a dark wood, will drink wine which a fool would not touch."

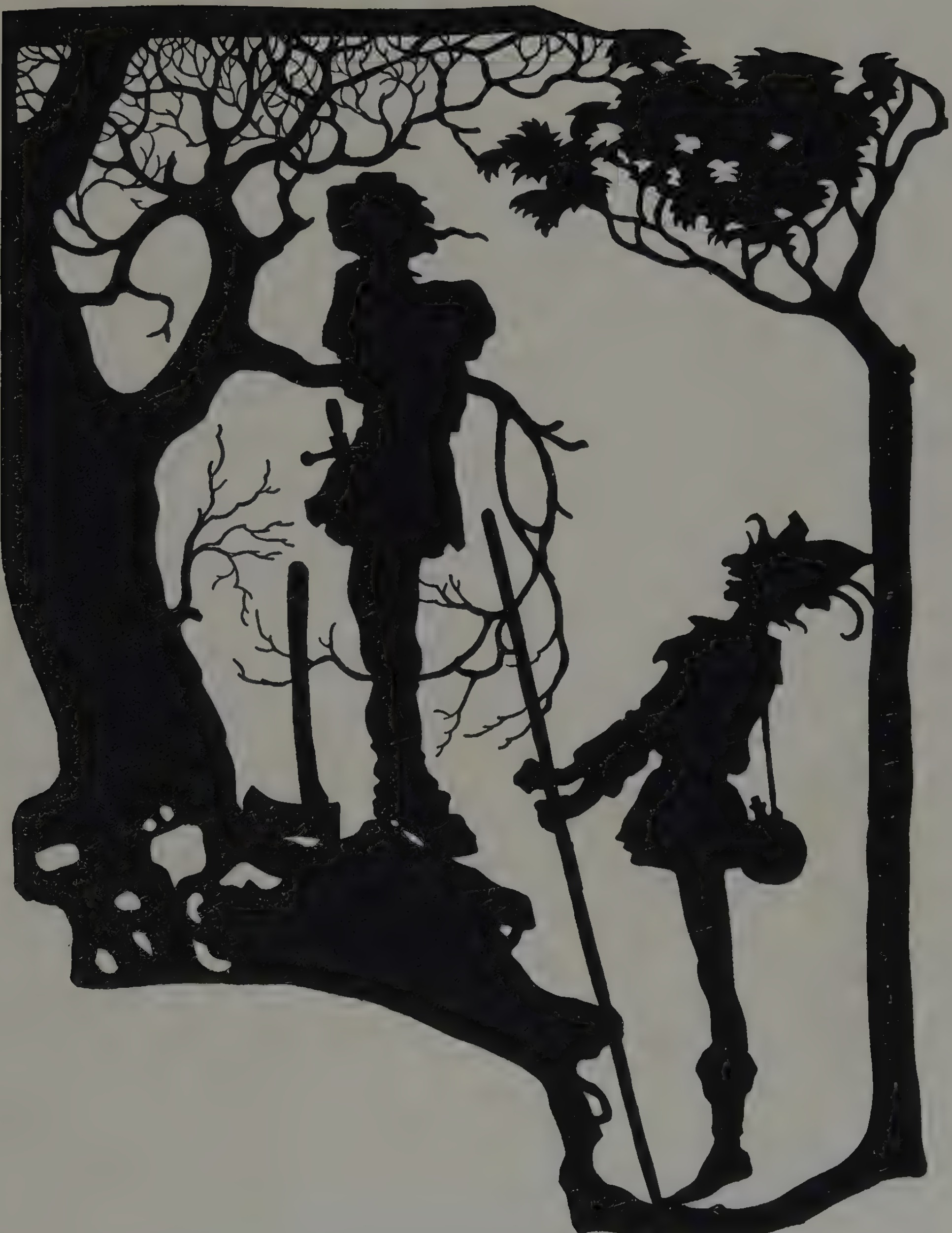
He had nothing left now on which he might live but his slender wits and chance.



At the Verge of the Forest Three Robbers Waylaid Him.

Nevertheless he went lightly on, cut a caper, and laughed at his shadow on the road.

At the end of the wood was a dale-side; at the foot of the dale ran



He Came Upon a Lone Woodman, Standing Gloomily in the Vast Solitude.

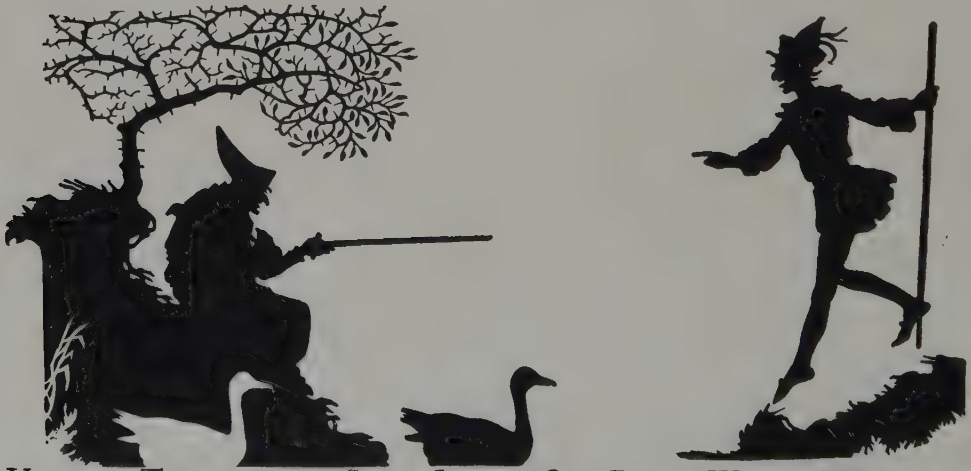
a stream; and on the opposite bank, under a thorn-bush, sat a little old blind woman, tending geese.

The fool plumped through the stream. "Who's there?" cried the little old woman. "Someone, I hope, who will drive my geese home. The gander is dead; they will not follow; I cannot see; and they will not obey. Drive them home, and I will give you your supper."

"I am Willing," readily replied the fool. "Goody, where is your home?"

He spoke to the empty wind; for, at his first word, waiting for nothing, "Follow me!" cried the little old woman: "Great things may be done by one who is willing!" Then she was gone, up the dale, with a hop, skip, and jump.

Now, though the fool did not know it, this was Dame Fortune. Much as one likes to dream of Dame Fortune as a fair young woman, gloriously smiling on those she favors, the truth is, Dame Fortune is old, blind, quick and peculiar in her ways, as well as in her movements, often quite unattractive at first sight, and mistaken for her sister, Misfortune; quite as apt to smile on a simpleton as on Solomon; and



Under a Thorn-bush, Sat a Little Old Blind Woman, Tending Geese.

inclined to herd geese as a relief from the annoying courtship of men. She appears at unexpected moments, in unexpected forms, and then is gone, before one has quite made up one's mind that so unattractive an old hag is in truth she whom one so long has sought so earnestly.

The fool stared round about him; but the little old woman was gone. He saw nobody anywhere, and was greatly puzzled what to do.

For lack of better guidance he drove the geese to the top of the dale. They marched in a straight line, in perfect order, one behind another. That they should not stray, this side or that, but go certainly, he made them everyone fast to a grapevine, and made up his mind to follow the geese whichever way they went.

Taking up the other end of the vine, he shouted, "Home, geese; home!"

At his shout the geese, having no leader, took up the hill in fright, and as they passed the hill-top sprang straight into the air in flight.

The fool, who clung to his end of the vine, was borne after them, swift as the wind, through the air. "This is easier than trudging the highway," he said. "But . . . I wonder how to get down?"

Fast flew the geese. Across the sky like a meteor the fool was borne.

On a distant hill-crest stood two armed sentries. Seeing the geese flying like a meteor overhead, they geared their cross-bows, and would have fired upon them point-blank. But the fool cried out in fright: "Good masters, don't add trouble to pain! I am not flying for pleasure!"

Astounded at a voice falling from the sky, "Halt! Halt!" cried the Corporal.

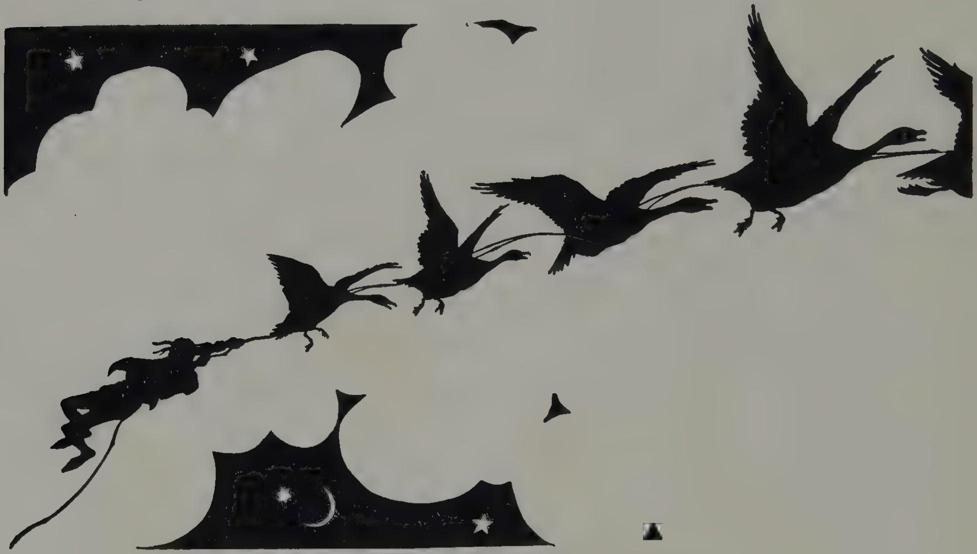
"Indeed, I would if I could," replied the fool: "But one cannot stop geese with a 'Whoa!'"

The soldiers thereupon lifted their cross-bows and fetched the geese down, transfixing their wings by a shaft through the quills.

Headlong they came fluttering down.

The fool, clinging fast to the vine, lay prostrate among the geese.

"Stand, sirrah; and speak!" cried the Corporal. "One who can fly like a goose through the air must give an account of himself. Who are you? Whence came you? Whither are you going? Give an account of yourself."



Across the Sky Like a Meteor.

"Master," replied the fool. "How can I give an account of myself? I am of no account. Yet, still, if you command me, I will tell you my tale. I am Willing. I was christened Willing whether I was or no. Whatever befalls me, by land or by sea, on earth or in the air, I shall be Willing. Willing I came; and Willing I go. Willing I shall have lived, and Willing die; and on the stone above my grave men shall carve: 'Here lies the body of a Fool who was Willing!' I came from the World of Wisdom seeking my fortune."

"Marry come up! None but a born fool would forsake the Ways of Wisdom to seek a fortune elsewhere!"

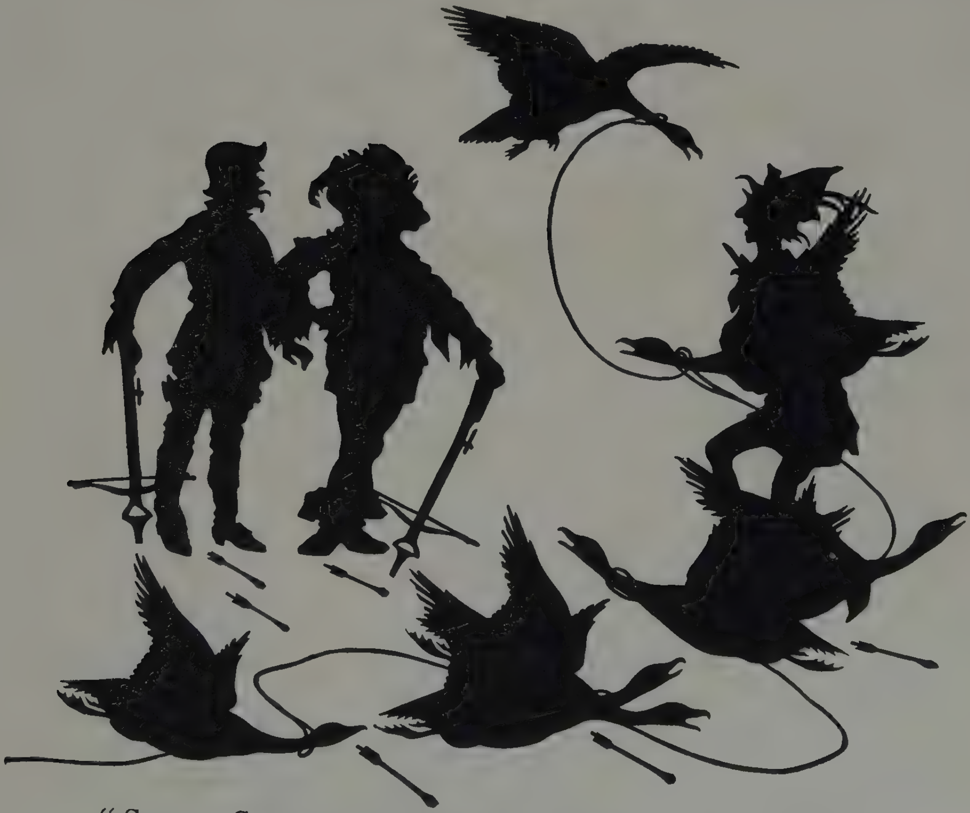
"Well, my good masters, I am a born fool. I am Willing."

"Certainly," said the Corporal, "you are the only man in the world who ever was born a fool, and was willing!"

"Master, I did not ask to be born, nor to be a fool. These things came to me like the nose on my face, as a birthday gift. Thus I am a fool; and Willing. But, pray, do not detain me, for I am in haste. Fortune has passed me by; and a fool who would overtake Fortune must travel fast."

"Fellow, how can one depart from the Ways of Wisdom, and hope to overtake Fortune. This is folly."

"Yes, master; and I am a fool. A fool is known by his folly as far as the eye can see. It is also true that a fool's fortune is easily known; one may be sure of it nine times in ten. Then why should I not find



"Stand, Sirrah, and Speak!" Cried the Corporal.

mine? I am willing to go half-way to meet it; or to the ends of the earth to find it. A fool's fortune is seldom far off, they say . . . have you seen mine anywhere?"

The soldiers laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks. Laughter lives longest under a thick skin; and a soldier's skin is thick. "What sort of a fortune is it?" they asked.

"Very bad, thus far," said the fool simply. "I am seeking the better part."

"The better part?" said the Corporal. "How can one who has found only misfortune in a World of Wisdom, hope to find better elsewhere? Marry come up! He shall only go further and fare worse."

"That is impossible," said the fool. "Nothing can be worse than the fortune I've had. Now, pray, leave me go, for things are moving, and time is slipping past."

The soldiers concluded that one who runs a fool's errand hurts nobody but himself; so "Pass on, poor fool," they said; "We are willing."

"No, no;" said the fool. "It is I who am Willing!" But the soldiers were gone up the hill.

Geese and all, the fool marched on, over many a meadow and many a dale spangled with starlike flowers, where the bloom of the wild apple-trees was like a young girl's cheek against the sky, and over many a wide moor, purple with heather, where there was nothing to be seen but the tumbling clouds rolling about in the wind; until at last he came to a very high hill, on which rose a castle, strong and tall, with bastions and towers and battlemented walls, builded of white stone, and, overhead, great banners, straining the banner-poles. In the castle-wall were many windows. "One for each goose," said he. For he was sure this was the home of the geese; when, in truth, it was the palace of the King.

He climbed a hill where peacocks walked, strutting in their splendor, through groves where the deer were familiar as sheep, until he came to the palace door. Through the door he passed into the courtyard; and through the courtyard into a lobby, with the geese in a flock behind him.

"What, in the name of Polyphemus, do you, here, with your squawking fowls?" demanded the astonished Usher, his hat flying off with excitement. This is a habit peculiar to Ushers.

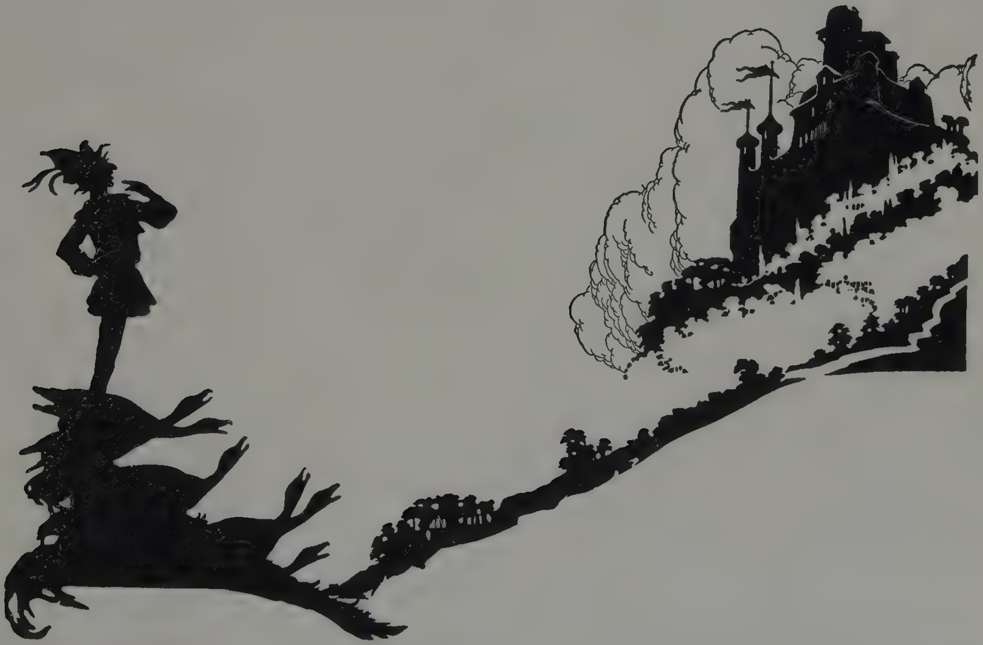
Seeing splendor all about him, the fool made sure that he was come to Fortune's house.

"Tell your mistress, Dame Fortune, that we have come," said he. "And don't keep supper waiting. The geese are hungry; and so am I. It is time that we were fed."

"Geese? Mistress? Supper? This to the King? Who are you, Master Popinjay, that you would be insolent to the King?"

"I am Willing."

"You are willing? Good sooth, and odds-todds! What imperti-



AT LAST HE CAME TO A VERY HIGH HILL, ON WHICH ROSE A CASTLE, STRONG AND TALL.

nence, to be willing to be impudent to his majesty, the King! Out you go!"

They thrust the fool from the King's door, and drove the geese after him.

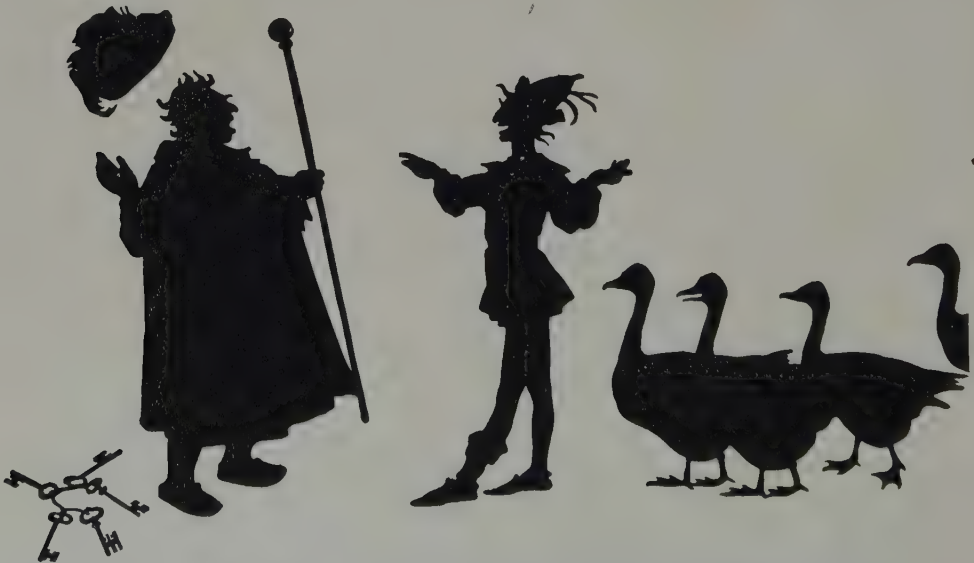
"Alas!" he sighed. "Unlucky me! Yet how could I not be Willing?"

As he mused dolefully, up came the coach. "Out of the way!" cried the spurring postillions; "Or we shall drive over you. Whoever you are, get out of the way!"

"Drive over me. Nobody cares: I am but Willing!" answered the poor fool.

"Why! who is this most singular fellow," cried the King from the coach, "who is willing, though one drive over him? Who are you, strange fellow?"

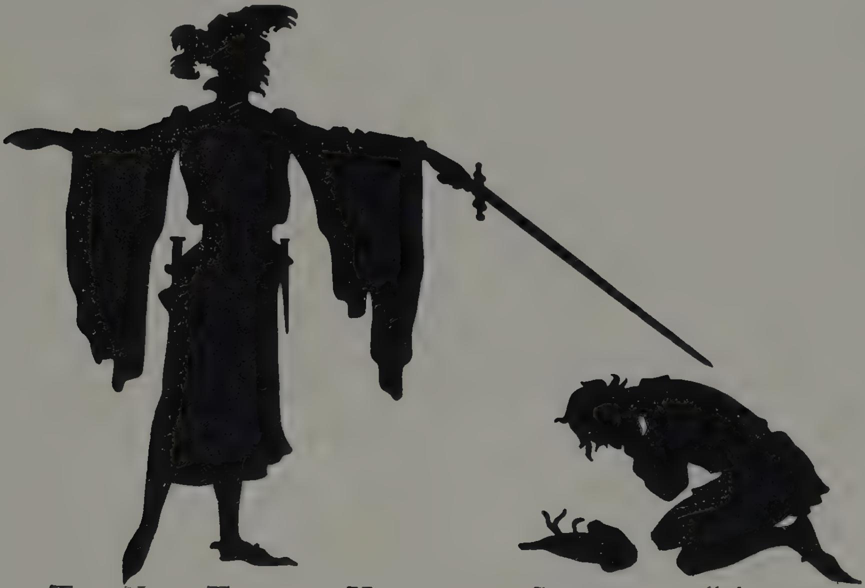
"My lord," said the fool, when they had brought him to the King, "I am Willing. No matter what comes; though I be imposed upon,



"What, in the Name of Polyphemus, Do You Here, with Your Squawking Fowls?" Demanded the Astonished Usher.

run over, made a goose of, cheated, brow-beaten, and abused, I am Willing. The geese starve; they clamor for food, unwilling to starve; and, see, they are fed, because they object. I, too, starve; but, alas! I may starve; I am but a poor fool. I am Willing."

"You are indeed a great fool!" said the King.



THE KING TOUCHED HIM ON THE SHOULDER. "ARISE, SIR FOOL-WHO-IS-WILLING!" SAID HE.

"Yes, my lord. I am Willing."

The King stepped suddenly down from his coach. "Kneel, sirrah!" he said, and drew his long, bright sword.

The fool fell to his knees. "This," he said, "is the end of it all!" The King touched him on the shoulder. "Arise, Sir Fool-who-is-willing!" said he. "My court contains many a fool; but never a one who is willing as you to serve me to his own disadvantage. Dress this man!" he cried. "And feed him. He shall be my boon companion, a willing fool, to comfort me when Wisdom has made me weary. I wish so often for something besides my own troubles to laugh at."

So the outcast, the Born Fool, became the King's companion, because, through hard luck and worse, through thick and through thin, no matter what came, he was Willing.

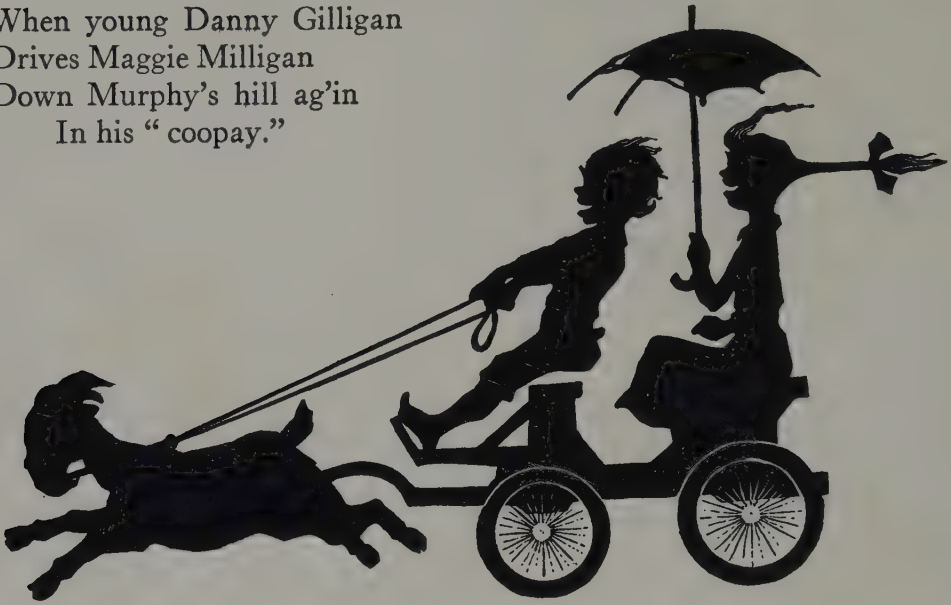
Though many envied him his prosperity, and said, sardonically, "Good places at court are sometimes to be had for very little reason!" it is a comfort for those who are dull, like me, to think that a fool, who is willing, may sometimes find good fortune.

THE PROUD MISS O'HAGGIN

THE proud Miss O'Haggin
May ride in her wagon,
Her landau, or drag, in
The park all the day;

But she'd give all her leisure
And wealth beyond measure
For one half the pleasure
Down Haggerty's way,

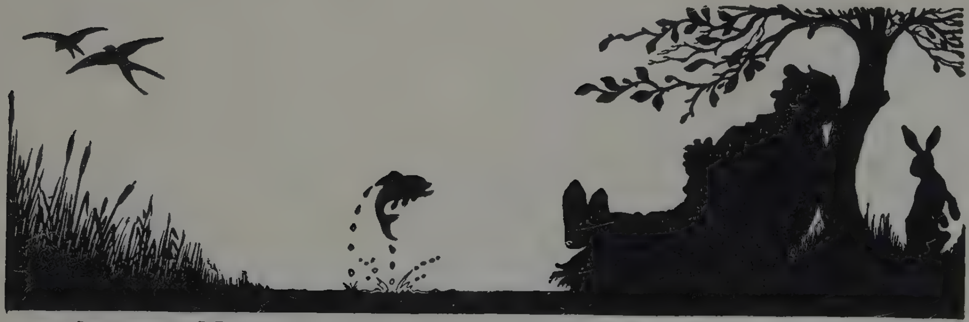
When young Danny Gilligan
Drives Maggie Milligan
Down Murphy's hill ag'in
In his "coopay."



ABIJAH'S FOURTH OF JULY

ABIJAH STONE strolled off alone
While yet the morn was hazy;
The neighbors' boys made such a noise
They almost drove him crazy.
"I love my country well," said he,
"But think it is a sin, sir,
To spoil July's sweet jubilee
By making such a din, sir!"

So, in a nook beside a brook,
Serenely sound asleep, sir,
Abijah lay the livelong day,
Curled in a little heap, sir;
While in the town the brass bands brayed,
And cannon boomed like thunder,
Until a very small boy made
A most tremendous blunder.

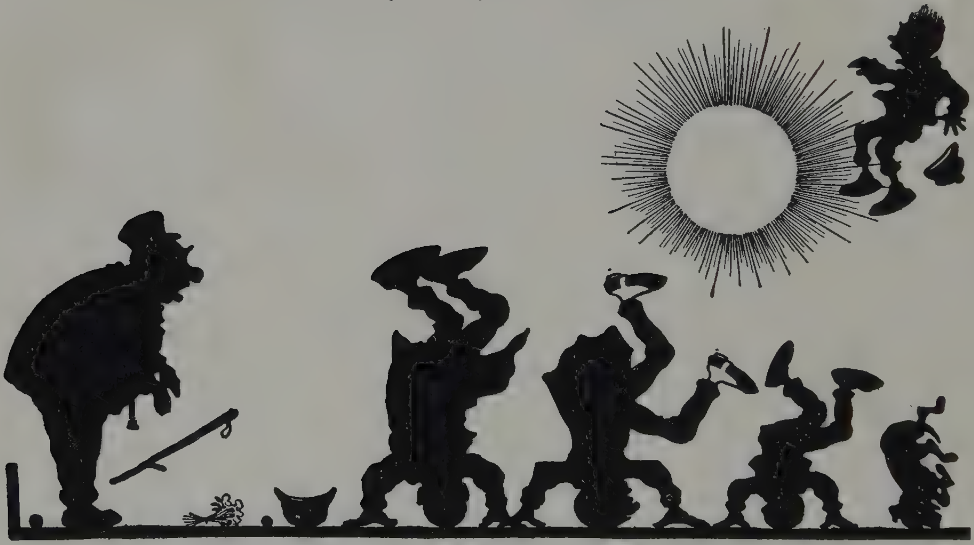


So, in a Nook Beside a Brook, Serenely Sound Asleep.

For, just at dark, he dropped a spark
Where sparks are very worst, sir;
A blinding flash — a frightful crash —

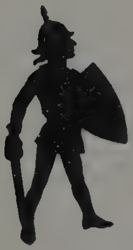
* * * * * * * *

A powder-keg had burst, sir!
Abijah found but scattered shreds
When he returned to town, sir,
And people standing on their heads
Where they had just come down, sir!



The People Standing on Their Heads.

Little Peter and The Giant.



I

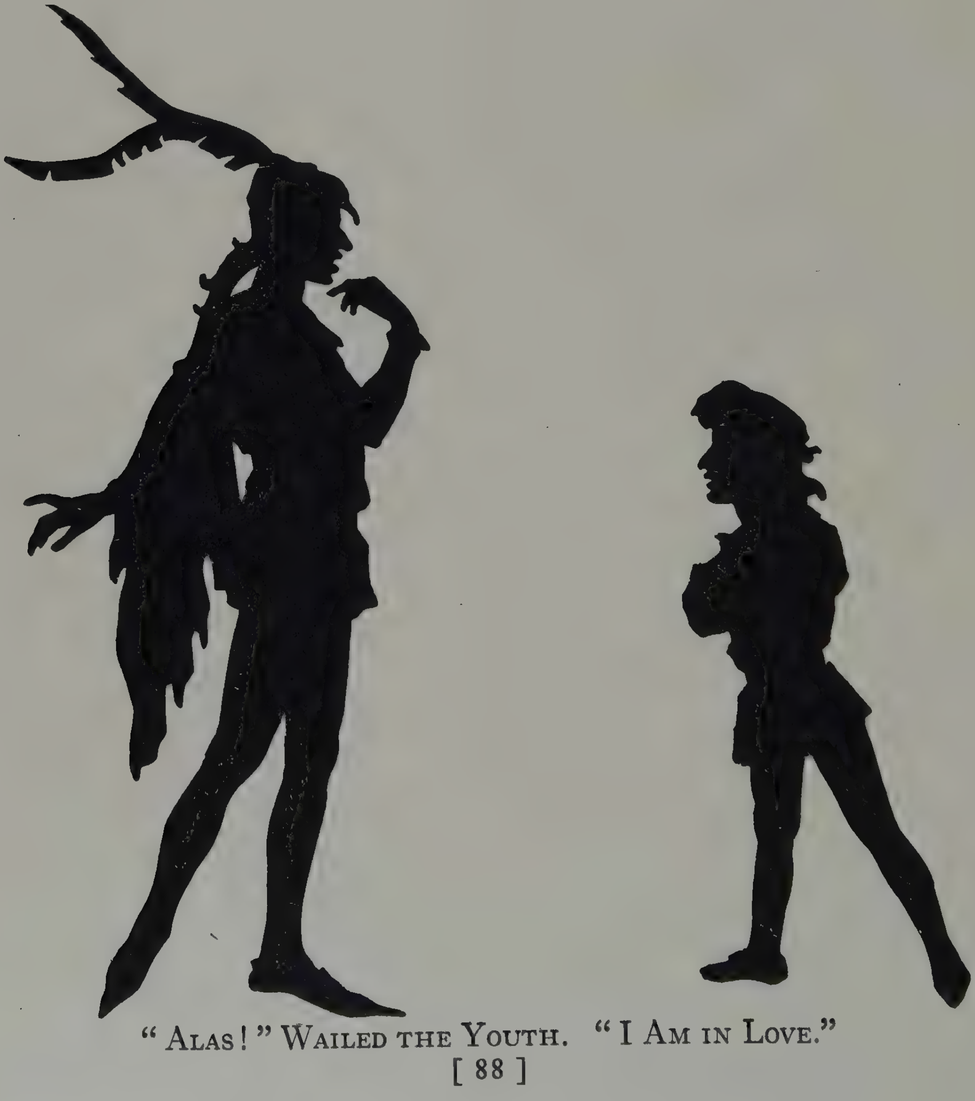
A GREAT many years ago, in the only country where there ever really were giants outside of the dime museums, Little Peter sat in the fence-corner, dreaming his day-dreams. There was nothing else for him to do. He was too small to be an esquire or a knight, too weak to work, and not deformed enough to be court jester. He always came home at meal-times and to bed; so his mother made no complaint or compliment. She set little store by Peter, for he could never go to war and win an estate in some far country, nor have a large stone sarcophagus in the abbey when he died. And, dreaming in the fence-corner, he pondered much on many questions that people having more to do had less time to consider.

As he dreamed he heard a piteous voice wailing, "Woe is me! Woe is me!" Clambering to the fence-top, he saw a tall and handsome lad sighing along the road, his features stained with dusty tears.

"Why say you 'whoa'?" asked Peter. "You go slow enough now."

"Alas, it is not that sort of woe!" wailed the youth. "I am in love!"

"That seems passing strange, fair sir! I thought that love did always make one happy!"



"ALAS!" WAILED THE YOUTH. "I AM IN LOVE."

The stranger paused and looked curiously at the figure on the fence.

"You must be very young," he said simply.

"Not too young to have seen many in love, fair sir; yet none that I have known have ever suffered in this strange way."

"But I am a poet, alack!"

"Indeed? And pray, what strange thing may a poet be that to him love brings tears, and joy, sorrow?"

"I write verses on the merry seasons, on the sweet passion of love, on birds and bees and meadow-flowers in their time. But the seasons shortly pass away, and love is but a fair, false dream; birds and bees fly away ere-long, or perish quickly, and the loveliest flowers the soonest fade."

"You don't say? Why, that is too bad, indeed!" exclaimed Little Peter. "Were you born that way, fair sir?"

"Born what way, child?"

"Why, to this tearsome frame of mind? I did never see one who took this same sad pleasure in being sorrowful."

The poet wept.

"There, there," continued Little Peter. "It must, indeed, be rooted deep within your ribs, sir, to anguish you so! My mother makes a famous herb tea for the heart-burn; perhaps that would do you good. And is this maid so delightsome that your queer poet's mind can do nothing but weep?"

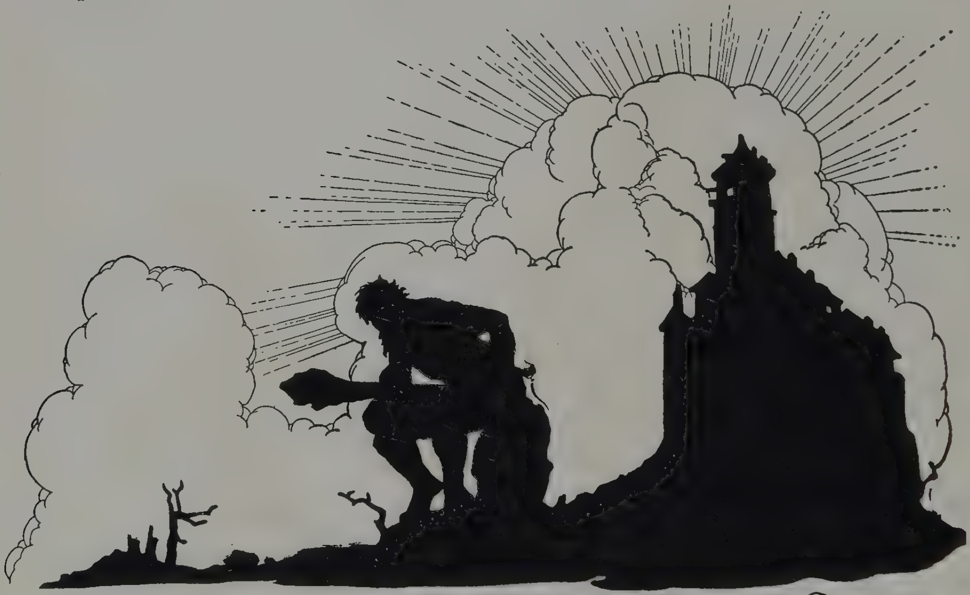
"Ah, dreary me! She is sweet as a morn in spring, as bright as the summer noon, as tender as the fading day of fall. She is my light, my love, my life — with her I live; without, I die!"

"Yes, but my brother Giles raved much as you, and when he brought her home she was but an every-day lass. And if you love this maiden so, why not go get her, instead of wandering about country lanes mildewing your velvet coat with tears?"

"Ah, boy, you little understand the world. I am a poet, and she — she is a princess," and his tears flowed again.

"A princess? Well, what hindereth that? I have spelled it in the leathern tome upon my uncle's desk that 'Noe maiden, however sweete and faire, is worth more than brave heart.'"

"But listen to the deeds that must be done to win her. Upon the Fatal Isle there is a bush whose golden berries hang unpicked, a book unwritten, and a stone unmoved. He who would wed the princess must pick the berries, write his name in the book, and move the stone from where it stands. Many go, but none come back; for on the gloomy isle there dwells a fearsome giant, and whosoever fights him dies. Thus comes the gruesome name, the Fatal Isle."

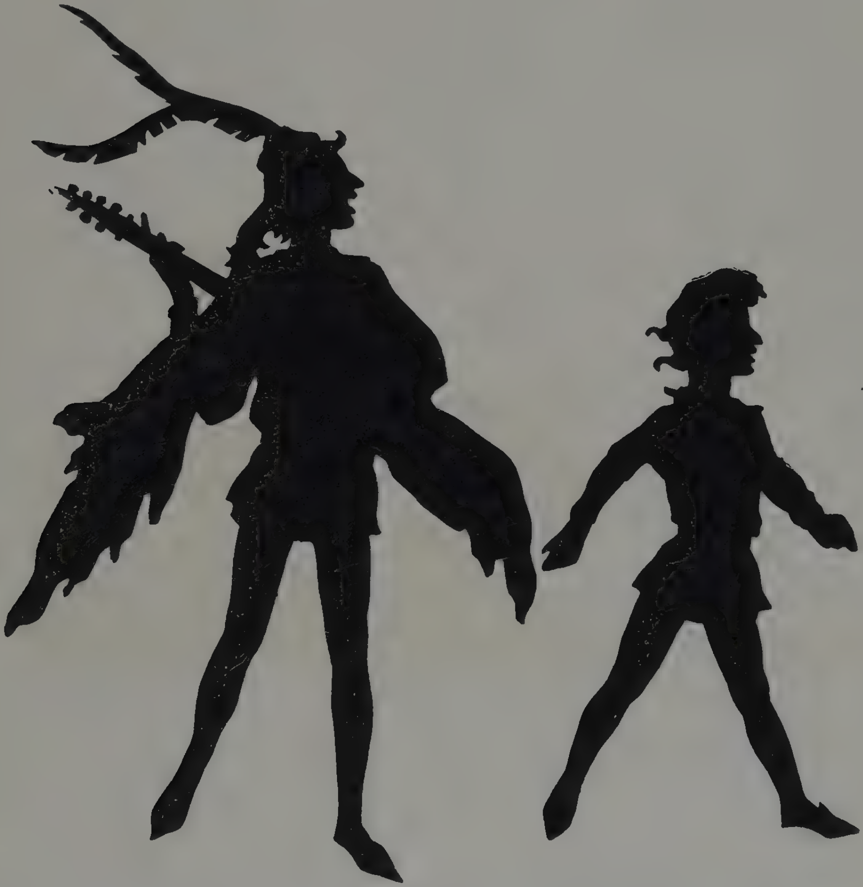

ON THE GLOOMY ISLE THERE DWELLS A FEARSOME GIANT.

Then Little Peter mused deeply a moment. "And all for a woman's smile," quoth he. "Truly, what simpletons men do be! I would not pinch my smallest finger for forty smiles, else there were a bowl of bread and milk or honey with them."

"But stay, there is a kingdom, a treasure, an army, a stable of Arab steeds, and a grand store of books also in the game."

"Oh, crickets! That were a prize worth the winning! What say you, sir; go we together to win it?"

"With you? Ha, ha, ha! And pray, grasshopper, what can you do for a giant?"



Little Peter Struck Out at a Good Round Pace.

"The raindrops run the river — the toad in the little hole was not hurt when the house fell. Go we in partnership, and I'll take care of the giant, never fear. Show me but the island, and you shall have your princess, faint heart — and as to how, there are many sensible things which poets do not know. Mind you your part; leave me mine. Do we go?"

"With all my heart. Lead on!"

Then down into the road leaped Little Peter and struck out at a good round pace, his shrewd gray eye flashing with a new fire.

"And what wild scheme of derring-do may be your plan?" inquired the youth.

"Your questions are yours to do with as you please," answered Peter. "My plan is mine, and I propose to keep it. Recipes for the killing of giants do not come so cheap as to be given away for the asking. And more, fair sir, do you not cease your woeful sighing, shrive me but I'll trip the heels of you into the next mud-hole we find!"

At that the poet put on a brave smile and laid aside his gloom, while Little Peter took on a new dignity that well became him, and held his peace. And so they went on right merrily until the sea was reached, with the Fatal Isle, the giant's castle, and the ghastly bone-strewn beach in sight. At this the poet set to shaking like a leaf, but Peter waxed more eager than before.

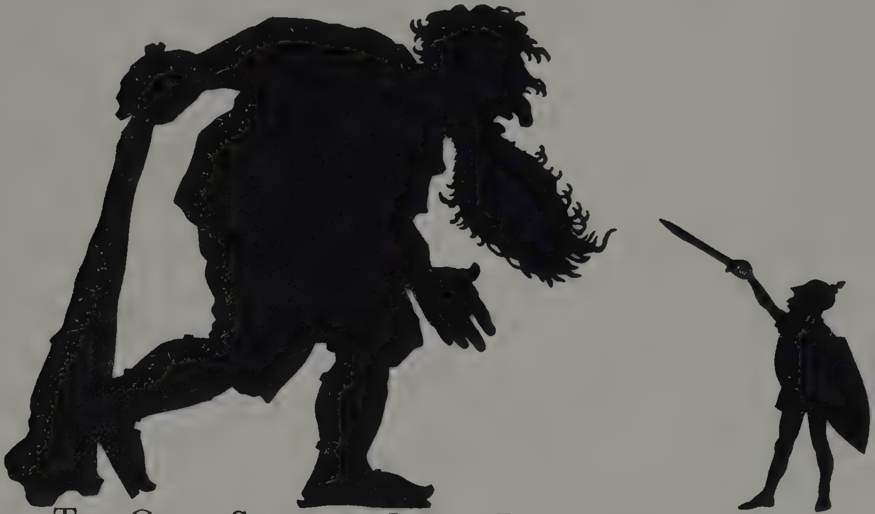
II

BRAVELY accoutred with small sword and buckler, buskins and shining helm of steel, Little Peter rowed right manfully to the Fatal Isle, while the fainting poet hied himself away to the ancient inn that stood hard by, and sought to drown his doubts in thimblefuls of mulberry wine.

At wading distance from the shore, Little Peter leaped from the dory, and pulling a stopple from its bottom, speedily sunk it from sight, that the giant might not find and destroy it, and so pen him up on the desolate place.

Then he strode up the beach, crying at the top of his lungs, "What ho! What ho! Come forth that I may do thee battle!" But the sound of a huge mouth-harp, on which the lonely Colossus whiled away the weary days between fights, was all his answer. Again he lifted up his voice defiantly, and beat upon his shield with a vim.

With a tremendous crash, the moldy drawbridge fell, and the rusty portcullis flew up with a shriek. Out rushed the giant, so blind with rage that he had nearly stepped upon Peter and smashed him flat before the fight commenced. Round the castle he foamed, through the chicken-yard, and over the moat with a mighty bound, fat though he was.

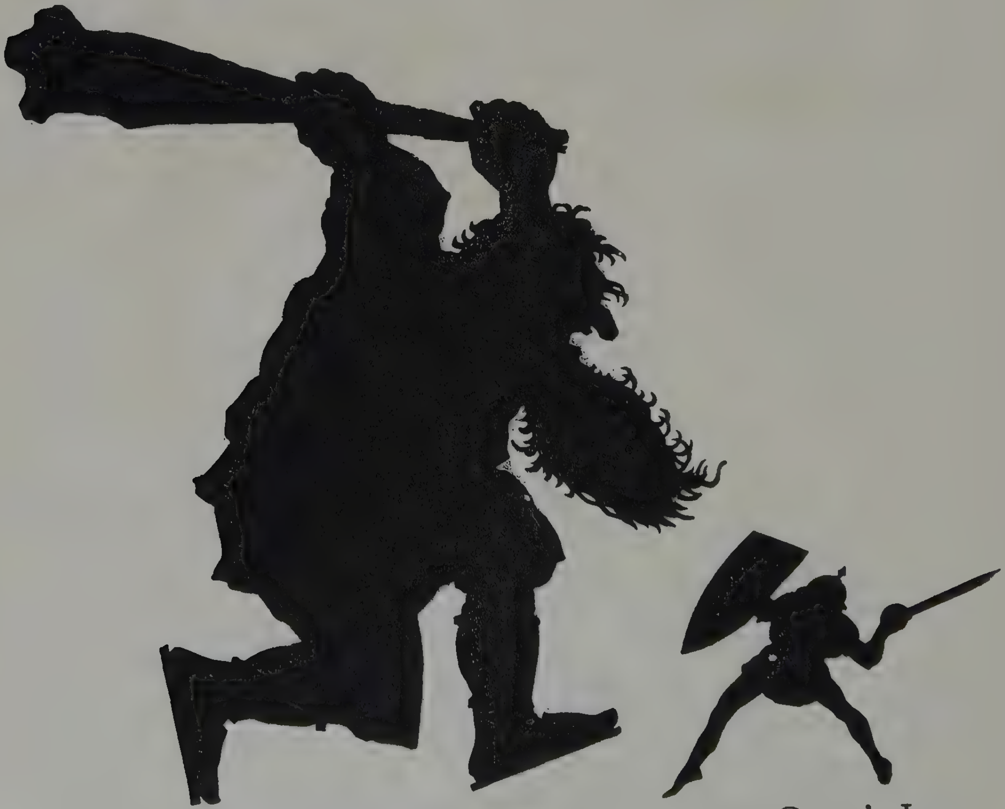

THE GIANT STARED AT LITTLE PETER IN AMAZEMENT.

"Adzooks!" puffed he, panting on the lawn. "Methought I heard a hail. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange!" Then he spied Peter, standing his ground sturdily, and stared at the little fellow in stupid amazement.

"Hullo, Toddlekins!" he roared. "What game is this the babies play, since men are all gone coward?"

"Toddlekins indeed!" cried Little Peter. "Harken, thou caitiff! Thou art too loud of mouth for courtesy. Draw and defend thyself, ere I lay thee upon these bone-strewn sands!"

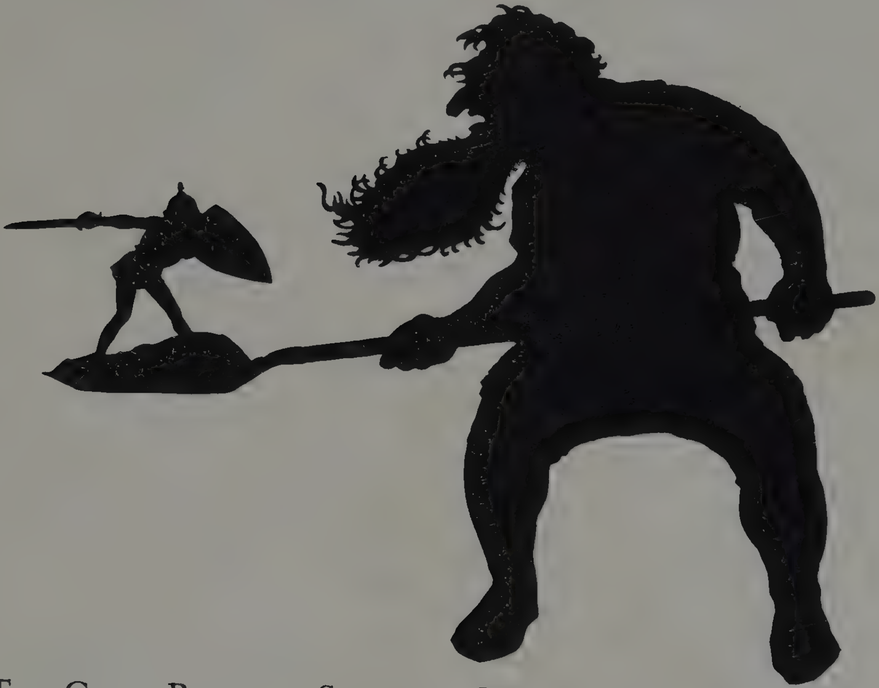
With which he made a sudden assault upon the giant's fat legs. Buncome, for this was his name, roared with startled anger, and sweeping his immense club all about, smashed two tall trees, and demolished the whole side of his summer kitchen. Peter adroitly evaded the blow; but it was so rapidly followed by a ceaseless shower of flail-like swoops that he barely saved his little self from being swept into the ocean or scattered about the beach. Furious at his repeated failures to crush the audacious mite, the burly Buncome seized a mighty shovel standing by, and, scooping up a sandy space and Little Peter with it, with one mighty thrust he made ready to throw the whole far out into the



Little Peter Made a Sudden Assault upon the Giant's Legs.

sea. Peter, seeing that all was up if he did not speak in haste, shouted, "Hold, lubber knight, for I yield me to your mercy!"

The giant stayed his hand a moment, panting, "Odds-boddikins! Why thought you not on that before? Had you not vexed me so, I would have had mercy and mashed you most tenderly; but now I mind me to rend you limb from limb!"



The Giant Buncome Scoops up Little Peter on a Shovel.

"And valiant, then, indeed, would be your tale of killing one so small as I! If that be what you call bravery, in sooth it was a poor quality that you chose when you set yourself up in the hero business. But kill me, and hear the women all exclaim, 'There goes Buncome, the baby-butcher!' Why, your name will become a laughing-stock in the land, and you, fallen too low for decent men to combat, will stay alone upon this isle, despised and forgot, until you fatten like a pig in a pen, scant of breath and scant of glory, all from being scant of wit. What fame get you by squashing me? What fear you? That I will move a stone four hundred times my weight, or steal berries beneath your eyes?"

"Gadzooks! Sir Spiderlegs, those be large thoughts for a little head! You shall be my serf. Yet where shall I keep you?"

"Chain me to your leg," said Little Peter; "then I shall be always with you to give you good advice."

"By my halidom, Toddlekins, you are right! and so shall I tether thee."

Next day, the breakfast platters cleaned, and the beans put to soaking for dinner, the huge giant and Little Peter set out upon their rounds. Tied by the giant's key-chain to Buncome's leg, the small prisoner had a lively time keeping up with Buncome's stride. But, though the day was hot, so stupendous was the bulk of the man-mountain that Peter, beneath, ran all the while in perfect shade. Indeed, Buncome could not see his little slave at all unless the tether was stretched to its utmost, and Little Peter was in high glee, for all his plans were working finely.

Reaching the bush that bore the golden berries, with much scratching of his dull head Buncome managed to count the precious bits upon his fingers, to see that none had been stolen in the night. They were all there. But, as he straightened up to scan the horizon for strange sails Little Peter cautiously pulled a small pan from under his doublet, and began to pick the berries as fast as his pudgy fingers could fly. Noiselessly they dropped into the pan.

"Ho, ho! What are you up to down there?" said the giant, in tones that shook the hill.

"The midges bother me so that I have to drive them off with my chain," answered Peter. Buncome was too close to the bush to see it over his huge paunch when he looked down; so all the berries were soon picked. Then from his pocket Peter pulled a paper of brass buttons and stuck them on the bare branches. They glittered finely in the sun;

so that when the giant glanced back from his path, the bush seemed to bear even more berries than usual, and he went on, chuckling at his faithfulness.

Just beyond the hill was the antique, carven, rocky niche in which the great book of empty pages had for years awaited the name of the hero who never came. Down plumped Buncome on his stalwart knees to examine the leaves. Peter had to fly to the length of his chain to keep from under the crush. The sheets were fair as the driven snow, without line, or mark, or blot. Then the giant swept the horizon with his spy-glass, that no adventurer might come too close to land. That was Peter's opportunity. He clambered nimbly to the high desk. Pulling the deep-rusted pen from the clotted ink-well, he scrawled his name in brave characters across the page, turned a few leaves over upon it, and clambered down again just as the giant hurried on.

The rock that figured in the task lay full two miles down the coast, and Buncome ran the entire way. Had Peter not clung desperately to the giant's leg, he would have been jerked to pieces in a little while, or trampled under foot.

" Good lack! " he gasped, when at last the giant sat him down upon the stone to breathe. " If thou dost run this awful twenty mile each day, good master, then thou art duller than I dreamed. A pinch of wit would save you this weary task. You can lift this great rock with ease. Take it on your broad back, untether me that I may keep good watch for you, and carry the rock home and safely down your own big cellar. No knight could find or move it there, I ween, with you at hand all day; nor would this dreary score of miles be necessary more."

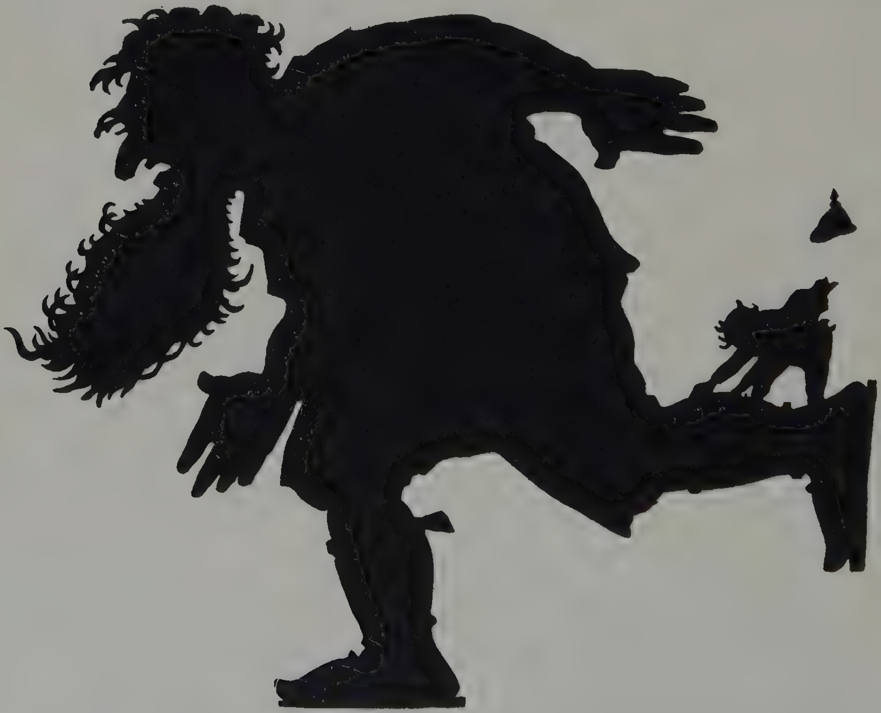
" By my breath, babykin, you have a head like the king's counselor. Where got you it? "

" It was a birthday present, if you must needs know. But hoist you the rock, and get we home, that dinner may not wait."

The towering castle reached, Peter pretended to turn in haste to the dinner, while the giant sprung the great bolts of the cellar trap, threw open the massive door, and, loading the rock upon his shoulders, stepped down the steep dark stairs. No sooner was his head beneath the floor than Peter sprang to the hatch, slammed down the mighty door, slid to the ponderous beams with all his strength, and turned the key in the lock. Then with a mocking laugh of triumph he sat him down to dine.

Three days, three nights the hungry giant howled and raved amid the dark and damp, which made him sore afraid. Then, his appetite proving greater than his ardor, he surrendered with good grace, and was set free, humble and steadfast to the terms of his release. Three days and three nights he ate all he wanted; then he turned the keys over to Little Peter, and scurried away to a far country where his prowess would not be damaged by reports of his ignominious defeat.

Then Peter rowed right proudly back to join the weeping poet who



Little Peter Clung Desperately to the Giant's Legs.

was wild with delight at winning the princess even so ingloriously as by proxy of a dwarf. "Such is the blind and eager egotism of them that be in love," thought Little Peter.

But soon again the sad poet began to wail. "Alas! I fear that, having won the kingdom and the princess, you will keep them both, and nevermore shall I have hope to win my love."

"A fever on your foolishness! Be this a poet's nature, to doubt a man of honor, to make a bear of a bugaboo, to weep for lack of else to do? I would liever be a dullard dolt! Faith, I do not want your princess. And should I, she would not have me, weak and stunted as I am, though a giant-conqueror. Give me the kingdom, keep your princess."

"But, alas! mayhap the king will hear of no such parceling of his daughter from hand to hand when the winner will not have her."

"Oh, fie! Why swim afore you even see water? Be poets' head so dull they borrow all their ideas?"

They hurried to the palace of the king.

III

OUTSIDE the lofty court, the poet, under Peter's eye, transformed himself into a wretched-looking wight, ill-clad and homely. Thus disguised, he played esquire to Peter, for Peter must needs have an attendant, as all knights have when cutting a dash before strangers.

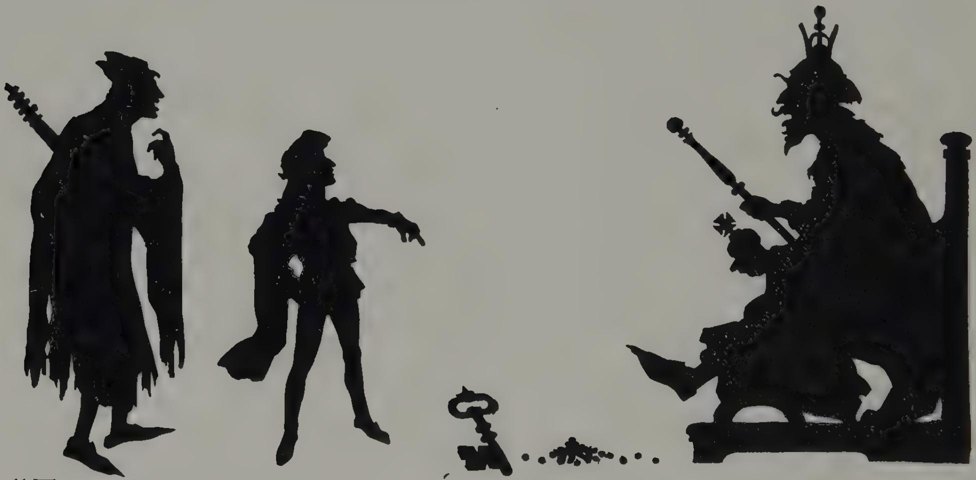
But good King Boli-Boli was loath to believe the tale. He sent a messenger in haste. And lo! the rock was gone, the berries were gone, the giant was gone, the castle was locked, and a name was written in the book. Yet still was the king loath to give the princess, Sunbeam, to the stunted stranger.

"Forsooth," said he, "it was some great knight did this, whom roads have long delayed. Ye are but impostors come to steal the prize."

Then waxed Little Peter wroth. "Taunt us not," he boldly cried to the king's very teeth, "or we will leave you as we left your craven giant! Here are the berries. Here is the key of the castle, with your royal seal and signet set upon it. Come, fetch us the princess; we have no time to waste in cavil."

The king was taken with this bold talk, for he was himself a warlike man. "Truly, these are the proofs; and while I marvel, I must fain believe my eyes. My daughter and the kingdom are yours, brave sir. Go call the princess, page."

Like the sunrise on a perfect day, she came: so fair that Little Peter's heart, which faltered not at giants, stood stock-still. "And yet," he mused, "a father would give her for a paltry deed!"



"Taunt Us Not!" He Boldly Cried. "Here Are the Berries."

But when the princess looked upon his strange figure, she shook and paled with fright. Turning to her father she faltered pleadingly, "Oh, father, tell me not this is the man whom I must wed!"

"Silence, daughter! Affront not a greater than all my kingdom knows — who dared his life for your hand. What I promise I perform. Strange sir, here is my daughter — "

"Oh, father, I cannot! Oh, sir, have pity!" she cried, turning to Little Peter. "Have pity, when my father will have none!"

" Sweet maiden," said Little Peter, " pray let me have one word with thee apart."

" Sir," she sobbed, " I have but one word for thee. I love another, a poet, and as handsome a youth as thou art not. Keep me not to this promise, for it is the poet Azair that I love, and none other can I wed."

At this declaration, Little Peter's scarecrow squire leaped in air joyfully, and snapped his stained fingers in an ecstasy.

" Marry, sir, what ails your squire? " said the king.

" Ho! he doth scribble verse, and hankers for a princess's smile." Then rose Little Peter to his tiptoes, and whispered low into the princess's ear. What he said she never told. But, blushing sweetly, she smiled with joy, and replying, " That I will," ran to her room, laughing.

Little Peter gazed an instant after her, and spoke: " To-morrow I will claim my bride, O king. Falter not at any change, however great, but give her to the man who here presents this ribbon which she just now gave me as a plight of troth. I go to register my kingdom with the keeper of the seals. To-morrow you shall see her ready to my throne as summer sun to shine."

So saying, Little Peter withdrew, and saw the king and princess no more. He had won his kingdom, and rested his ambition there.

" ' Little Great-Heart ' men will call you from this day on forever! " sang the poet.

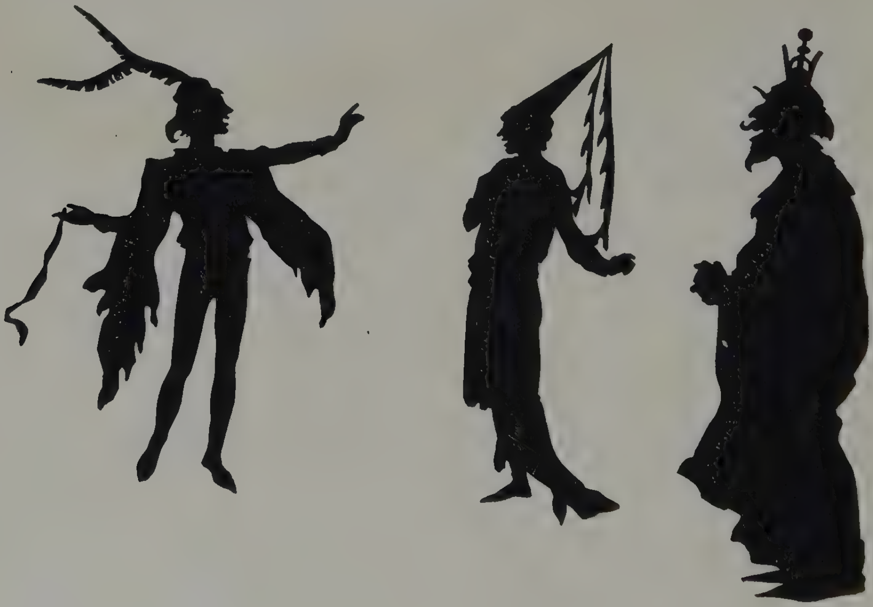
" Ah," said Little Peter, " this ' forever ' of men's is a strange eternity, fair sir. They end it often when they change their coats. Yet I have touched a woman's heart with kindness, and there will I live forever. Fare thee well — leave your tearful poesy, and be happy."

Bright and early, when the sun rose on the coming morrow, the poet, brave in his best suit, and bearing gaily the ribbon of his love, was at the court ere yet the sleepy scullions had washed the dishes from the breakfast of the king. Though the monarch did marvel much at the wondrous change that seemed so quickly wrought, he said nothing, not he — for right glad he was to have his son-in-law so handsome.

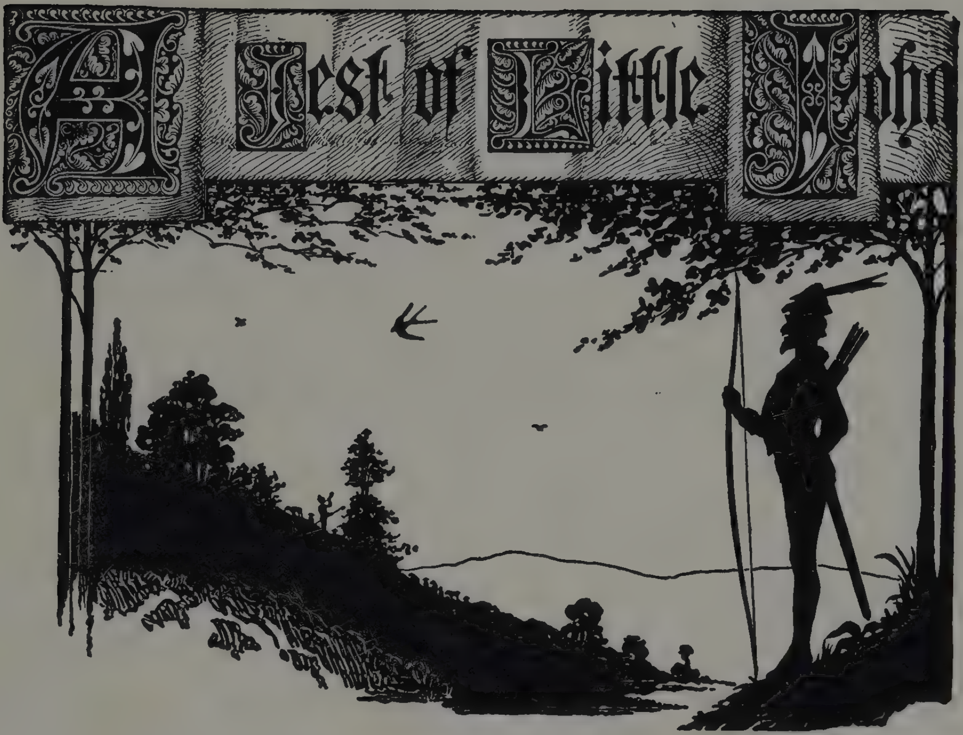
As for the princess, she was all gladness, and grew lovelier every day, till people came for miles to see the house in which she lived, although she had long since moved into another dwelling to avoid them. The pilgrims knew no better, and it did just as well.

The old king abdicated in favor of his son-in-law, and the young couple were enthroned amid the rejoicings of their subjects.

And Little Peter, or Little Great-Heart, as all loved to call him, took all his poor relations to his far kingdom and gave them high offices; hence he did all the work himself, as they were prodigies of indolence. His people loved him so that when he told them there was nothing else for them to want, they believed him, wanted nothing, and so were happy — so happy that they gave up all communication with the outer world. And some day, far away, the lost kingdom of Little Great-Heart may yet be found, with the people all very, very happy, and Little Peter still reigning over them.

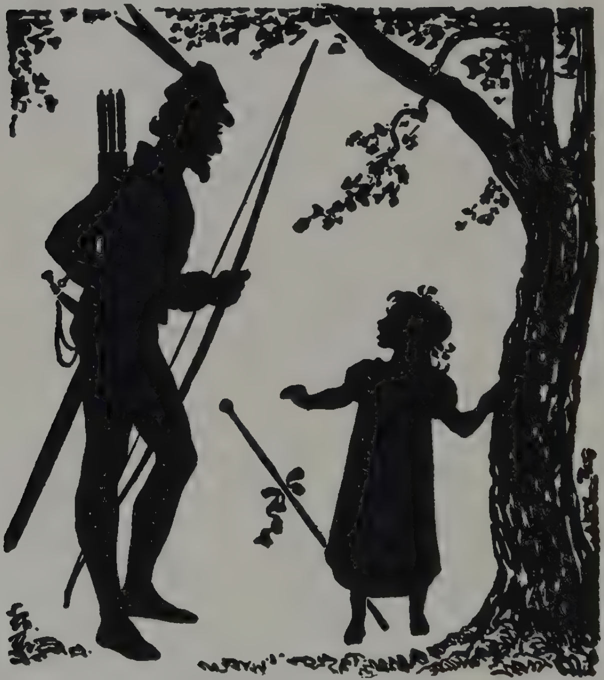


A Jest of Little John



HULLEE, hullo!” cried little John,
“It is a Monday morn.
I see the sheep upon the hill;
I hear the shepherd’s horn.
I’ll take my good long bow of yew;
I’ll take my arrows bright;
I’ll find some merry tale to tell
Before the fall of night.”
Then he hath donned his garb of green —
And to the woods is gone —
All underneath the merry greenwood
Went sturdy Little John.

Away he went by field and fen,
  By hollow and by hill;
The dun deer in the green fern
  Lay shivering and still.
He had not gone through merry Sherwood
  Two miles or scarcely three,
When he was 'ware of a little young maid
  Weeping against a tree.



"Why Dost Thou Weep, Sweetheart?" He Cried.

She was clad all in linen white,
  A ribboned stave she bore,
A rose-garland was on her head,
  Yet she weepeth sore.

A JEST OF LITTLE JOHN

"Why dost thou weep, sweetheart?" he cried,
"And wash thy cheeks away?
Why dost thou weep so bitterly
On such a bonny day?"
Her heart stood still with deadly fear,
She scanned him o'er and o'er;
But when she saw his merry blue eye
She feared that man no more.
"I was the Queen of May," she said,
"But all the rest are gone;
And who can play at queens alone?"
Then up spake Little John:

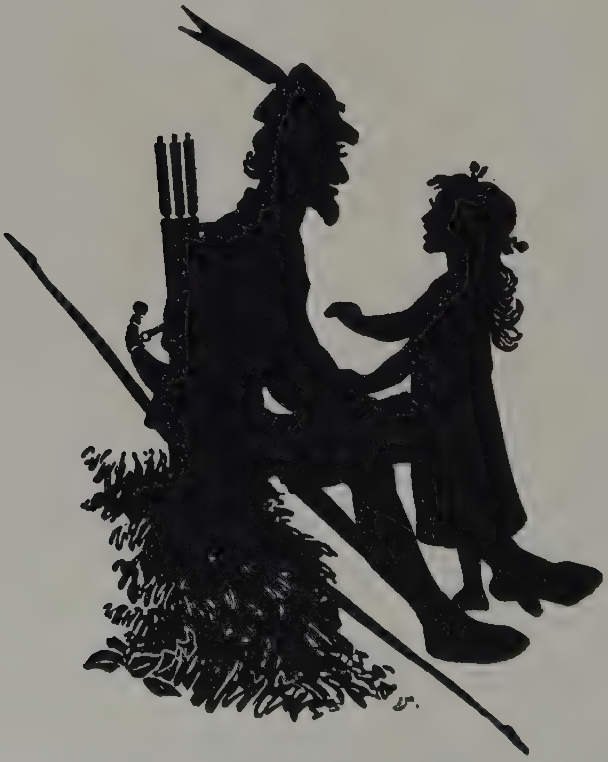
"Cheer up, sweetheart; the sun doth shine;
It is the month of May;
Take no more thought on bitterness
Till thou art old and gray.
If thou wouldst play at being queen,
Then make no more ado:
I am the Khan of Tartary,
And I will play with you.
We'll hunt the deer on hill and dale;
I'll fly a shaft for thee;
We'll rest beside a little brown brook
Beneath the greenwood tree."

Then he hath taken her in his arms,
Like a little bird to his breast,
And smileth behind his yellow beard
At such a merry jest;
For never a sight like this was seen
Beneath the greenwood tree —

A JEST OF LITTLE JOHN

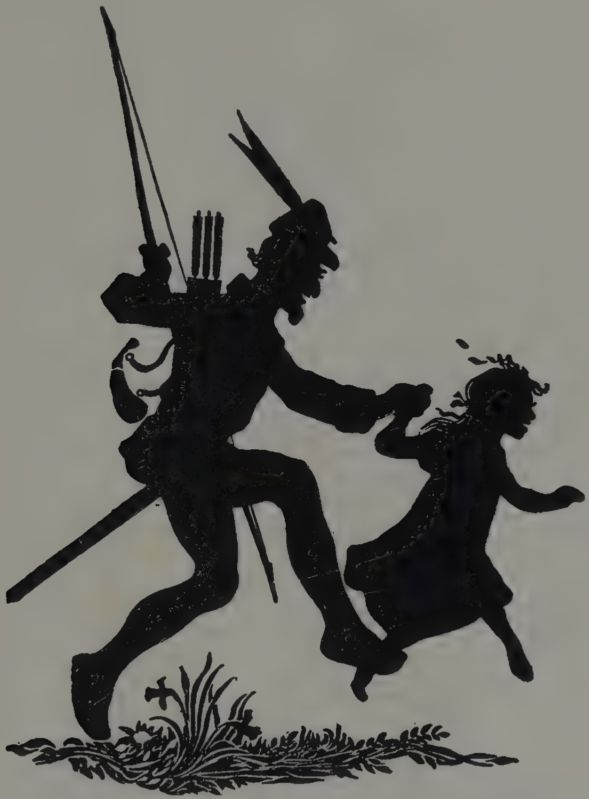
Bold Little John a-serving gone,
  A nursemaid for to be!
"Who is thy father, sweetheart?
  And who is thy good dame?"
"My father is Sheriff of Nottingham,
  And Nell is my mother's name."

Now Little John's brown face is grim,
  And he hath grasped his knife;
For the proud Sheriff of Nottingham
  Hath sworn to have his life.
But up spake then the Sheriff's daughter,



Leaned Upon His Knee.

And leaned upon his knee:
"Art thou afeard of the wild outlaws
That in the forest be?"



THEY DANCE AMONG THE DAFFODILS.

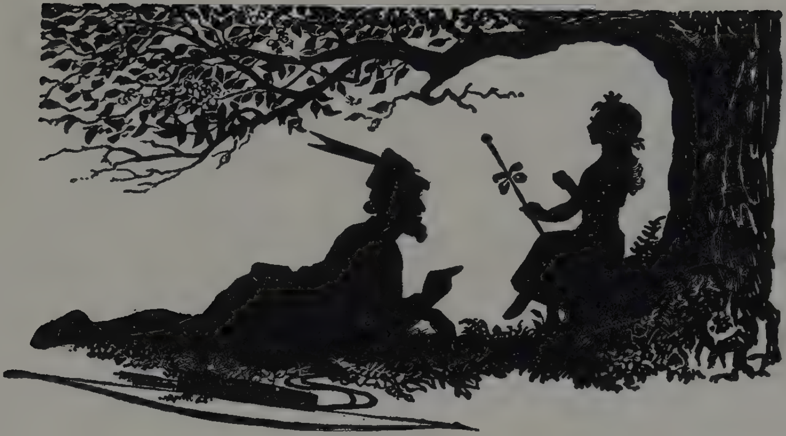
Then loud laughed sturdy Little John —
Then loud and long laughed he:
"I do not fear the wild outlaws,
No more than they fear me."

"I fear bold Robin Hood so," she said,
"I dare not sleep at night;

And when I dream of Little John,
I waken in affright."
Then loud laughed sturdy Little John —
Then loud and long laughed he:
"Have no more fear of Little John
Than thou hast fear of me.
He is a stout and sturdy knave,
But no more wild than I;
And if it did not bite him first
He would not harm a fly.

"And of bold Robin Hood," said he,
"Now be no more adrad;
For a kinder heart than Robin Hood's
No woman ever had."
Now they are gone by sunny dale,
By green and leafy nook;
They dance among the daffodils
That smile beside the brook.
Through Sherwood forest deep and green
Together they are gone:
The dun deer on the uplands stood
And stared at Little John.

He made a horse of his broad back
And pranced along the bank;
He made a bowl of his tall hat,
And out of it she drank.
He made a throne of ferns and moss;
He wove a primrose crown;
And bound his baldric for a sash
About her linen gown.



AND TALKED OF ROBIN HOOD.

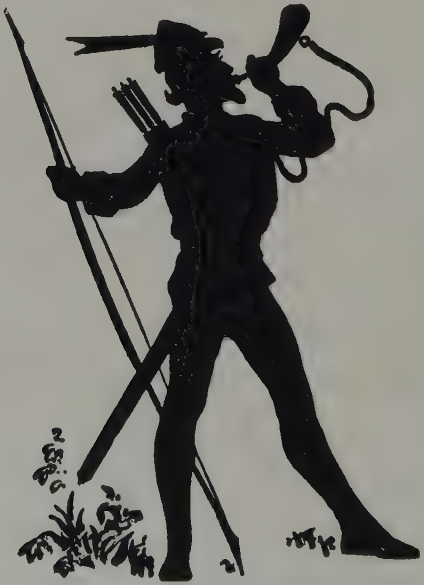
He gathered sweet-flag in the brook,
  And spice-roots in the wood;
He lay beside her in the grass,
  And talked of Robin Hood.

Anon he sang a merry song
  About a merry man
Who went to sleep in London town,
  And woke in Ispahan;
And when he found that he was lost,
  Just covered up his head,
Woke up again in London town,
  A-tumbling out of bed!
The Sheriff's daughter clapped her hands,
  And merrily she cried:
"I never had such a good playmate
  In all the world beside!

"Wilt thou not come to my father's house,
  And be my father's man?"

"Nay, I must return to Tartary,
And conquer Ispahan.
Two hundred merry men there be
Who follow in my train,
All rich in cloth of gold and green
As any don in Spain.
My army is of Tartars fierce,
Three hundred thousand strong.
Five thousand camels all are mine —
Unless I count them wrong.

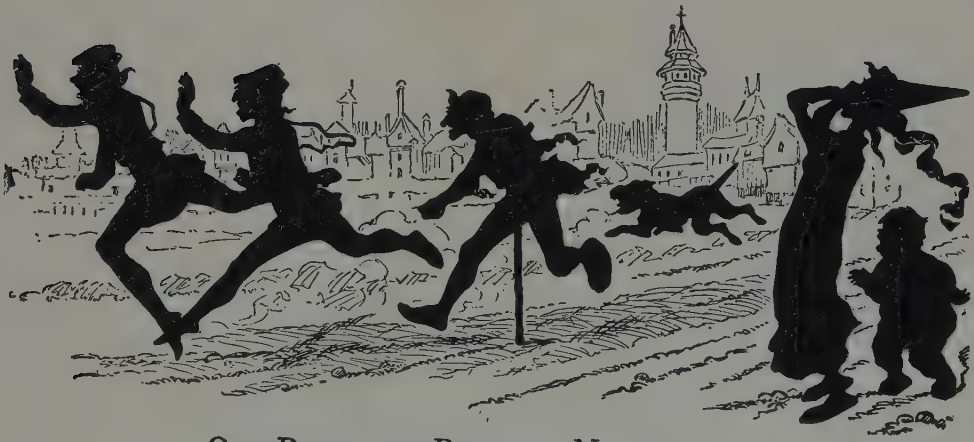
"The under side of all the sea
Is mine — when it gets dry."
The Sheriff's daughter looked at him,
And doubt was in her eye.



Then Straight He Took His
Bugle-Horn.

"Upon my word," cried Little John,—
 And wondrous grave he grew,—
"If I be Khan of Tartary,
 I'll swear the rest is true!"
Then straight he took his bugle-horn,
 And loud began to blow,
Until a score of outlaws bold
 Came running in a row.

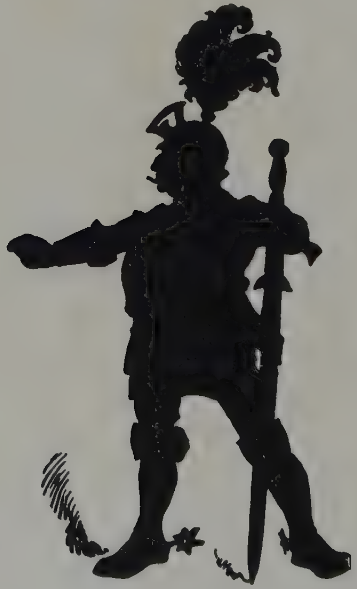
Out rang the bells of Nottingham;
 Astir was all the town;
The women wept; the cripples crept;
 The men ran up and down.
Some shouted here; some shouted there;
 Some went with bated breath:
For the Sheriff of Nottingham's daughter was lost,
 And the Sheriff was pale as death.
And he hath offered a golden horn
 And a purse of an hundred pound



Out Rang the Bells of Nottingham.
Astir Was All the Town.

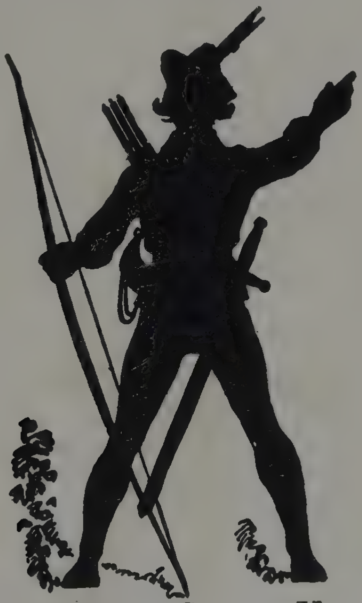
To whoso findeth his daughter dear
  And bringeth her safe and sound.

Now the warder stands at the city gate,
  With his hand above his eye:
A band is coming from merry Sherwood,
  As straight as a crow can fly.
"What ho! thou warder of Nottingham!
  Bring hither thy Sheriff to me."
The Sheriff is come to the city gate,
  With all of his company.
"Who calls for the Sheriff of Nottingham?
  Who calls for the Sheriff so keen?"
Out stepped a sturdy yeoman,
  Clad all in Lincoln green.



The Sheriff Is Come to the City Gate.

Clad all in Lincoln green was he,
  And his face was fair and bold;
A long brown sword hung by his side,
  And its hilt was wound with gold.
"Now who art thou?" the Sheriff cries,
  And his lips are white with foam.
"I am the Khan of Tartary,
  Bringing thy daughter home."
Then out stepped two tall bowmen,
  Clad all in gold and green,
With their long bows over their shoulders,
  And a litter swung between.

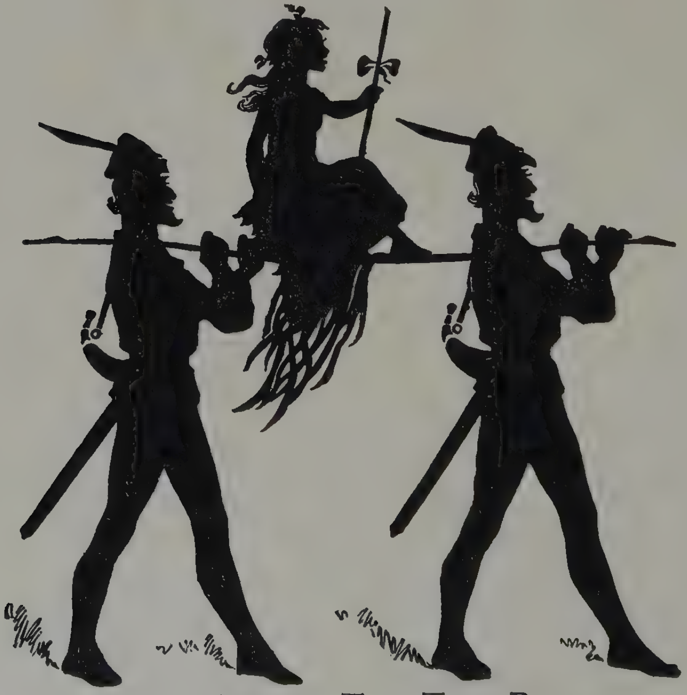


Out Stepped a Sturdy Yeoman.

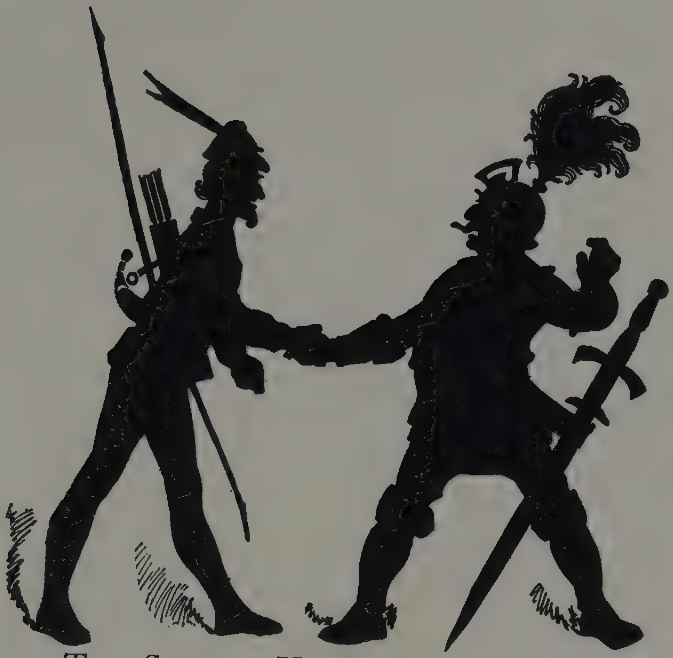
"My daughter!" cried the Sheriff,
  "Oh, tell me she is not dead!"
Up rose the Sheriff's daughter,
  With a garland upon her head.

"Why do ye weep, dear father?
And why so pale?" she cried,
"And why do ye come to the city gate,
With your company by your side?
I have been the Queen of the merry May,
All under the greenwood tree;
I have been to the court of Prester John
With the Khan of Tartary!"

Now the Sheriff hath come to the outer gate,
And the Sheriff can hardly stand:
He hath met with the Khan of Tartary,
And hath taken him by the hand;



Then Out Stepped Two Tall Bowmen.

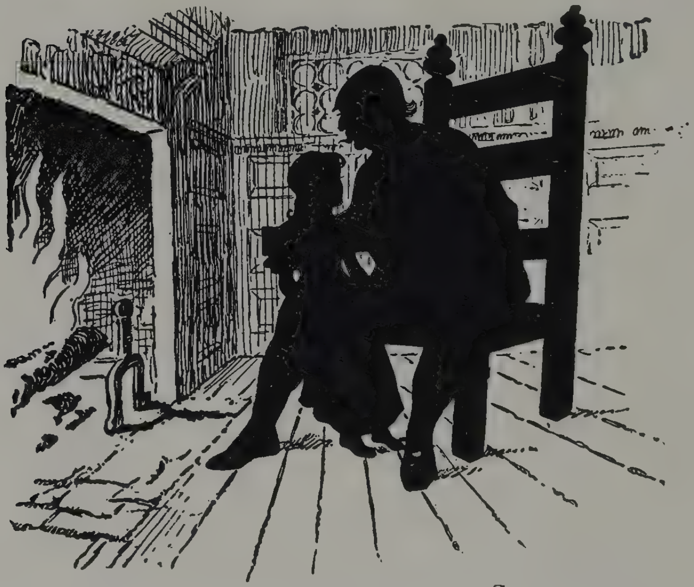


The Sheriff Hath Met with the Khan of Tartary.

And he feareth that he shall have tasted death
  Ere he go through that gate again;
For the hand that he holdeth is Little John's,
  And the men are Robin Hood's men.
"How now, Sir Sheriff! Why tremble so?
  And why so woe-begone?
It is not bale for a man to look
  In the face of Little John."

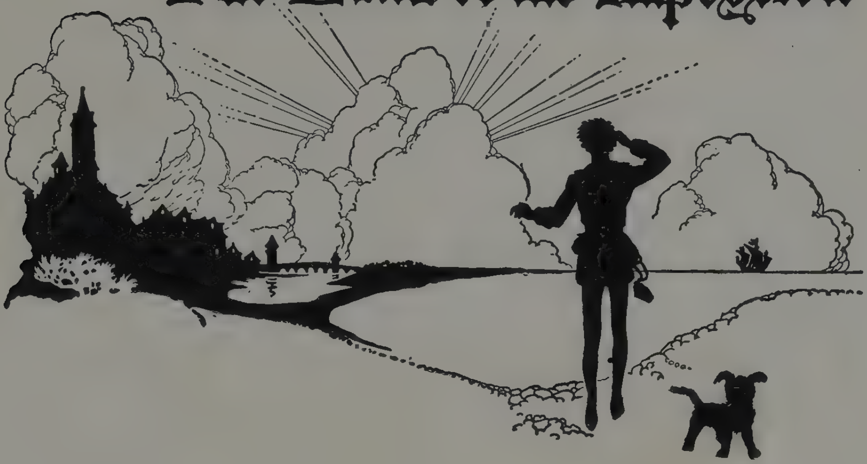
The sun hath set; the twilight falls;
  The birds have gone to rest;
The Sheriff of Nottingham sits by the fire,
  His daughter held fast to his breast.

"I have been the Queen of the May," she sighs —
His face she cannot see —
"I have been to the court of Prester John
With the Khan of Tartary."
The dun deer run in merry Sherwood;
Yet ere the week is gone
There cometh a purse and a golden horn
From the Sheriff to Little John.



The Sheriff of Nottingham Sits by the Fire.

The Land of the Impossible



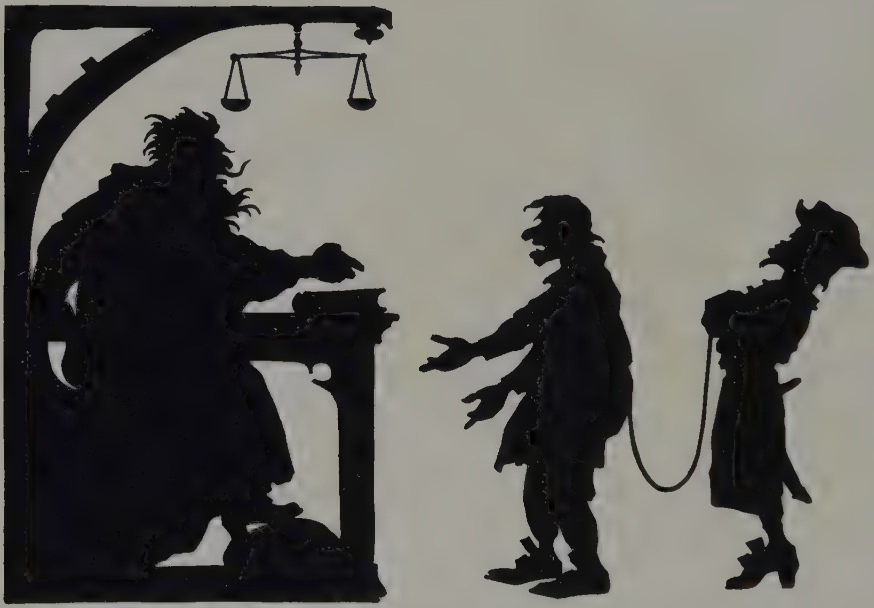
IT WAS on Maundy Thursday that little Nick Sicklefoot landed on the Shores of the Land of the Impossible.

How he came there makes little difference now. His beetle-browed stepfather had ill-treated him, and a little girl with yellow curls and blue eyes had refused to marry him until he brought her a fortune much larger than that of Sir Noodleby Trumpington, who lived in the great Manor House of Middle Plumpington. He could in no way do this in Plumpington; so he had set out to seek his fortune in the Land of the Impossible, where fortunes were easily made.

Where that strange land may be, no one nowadays knows. It is not marked in any of the geographies; and the last man who knew the way thither died long ago. It lies on the remote edge of the Great Gulf, which lies beyond the border of the largest maps; and little Nick Sicklefoot was the first, last, and only Englishman who ever set foot on its shores.

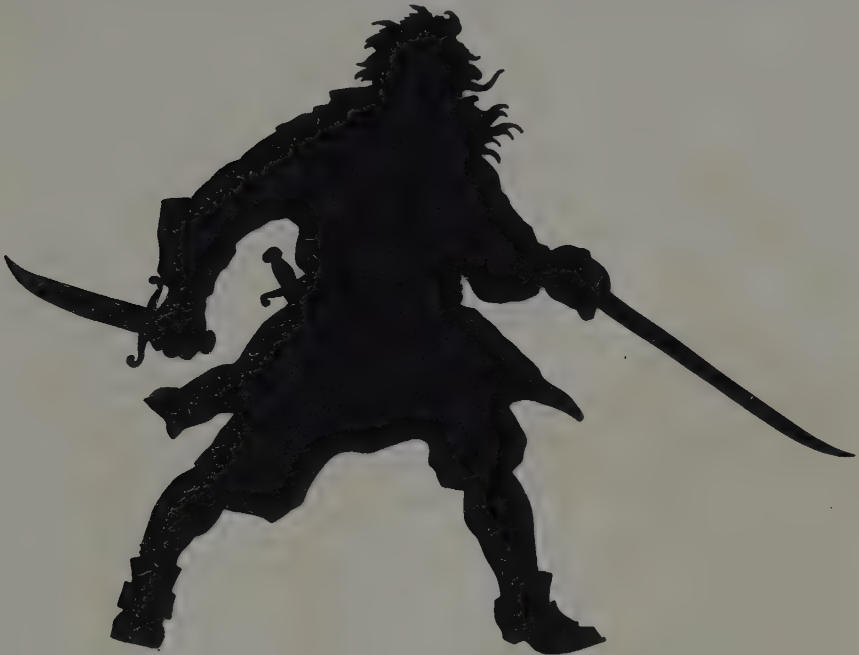
This odd country was ruled by a mighty Baron, who by day was the Supreme Judge of the land, but by night was a thief and a robber.

So wise, so just and so stern a judge was he by day that evil-doers stood in awe of his very name. But by night he was the boldest thief that ever broke a lock. So famous a judge was he, too, by day, that men came for miles to lay their wrongs before him, and to get justice at his hands for the robberies he did upon them in the night-time; so that in the course of years he had amassed a large fortune from his fees.



So Stern a Judge Was He That Evil-Doers
Stood in Awe.

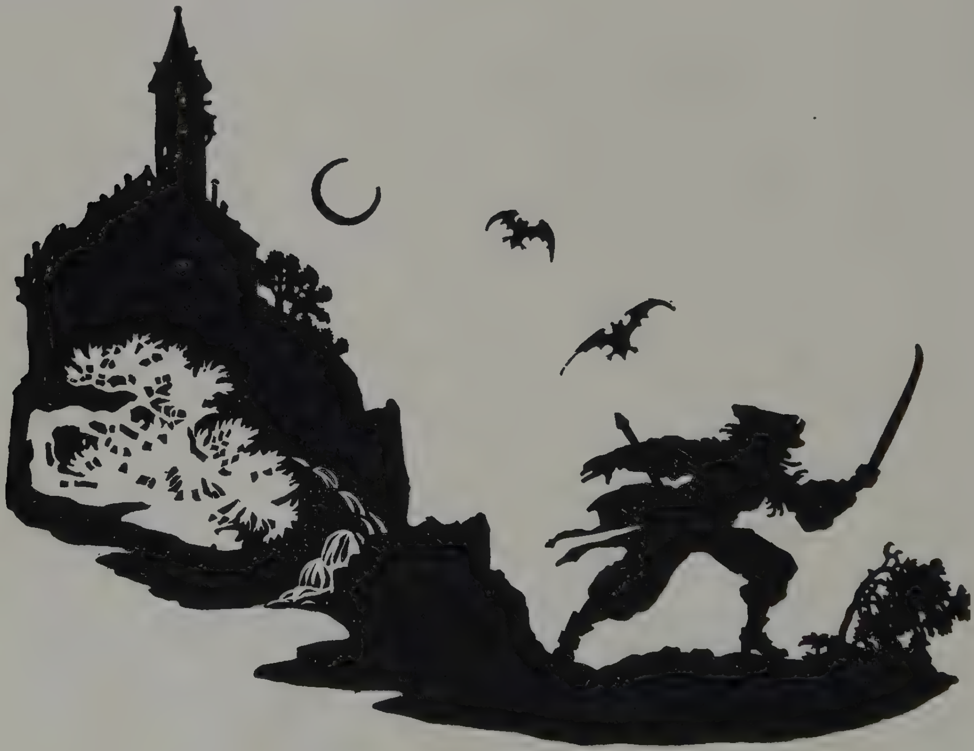
Since he was himself a robber by night, by day as a judge he knew all the ways of the wicked, and managed the police and constabulary with such shrewdness that when he started out at dusk to rob he found it almost impossible, so carefully was everything guarded. Yet, being a strong thief and a bold, and knowing by night all that he and the police had done by day to prevent his daring robberies, he managed by hook and by crook to make a living by theft during the Autumn. That Winter, however, was a hard one for the robbery business — bitterly cold, and with deep snows so constantly on the ground that several times he barely escaped capture from the tracks he left behind.



He Was Himself a Robber by Night.

As a Judge, day after day he vowed to end the robberies by which he kept the townsfolk in dread by night, and to that end doubled and redoubled the night-watch until there were more police in the land than there were people; so that night after night the robbery trade grew worse and worse; until, at last, driven to desperation, he broke into his own house, and robbed himself of every cent that he had.

When next day he came to the Judge's bench and found he had not a penny left to his name, and that the state also was bankrupt, he called out the whole constabulary, and vowed by the flicker of the great dog-star that he would stop these robberies if he had to turn the land upside down. From that time forth, day after day, with an armed band of constables, he rode up and down the land, from dawn to set of sun, pursuing himself so relentlessly and so closely that oftentimes they came upon the place where he had slept overnight as a robber ere yet the bed was cold. And at night when he went out to rob he was chased about, from pillar to post. He dared not let his right hand know what his left was doing. It was a most uncomfortable life.



At Night When He Went Out to Rob.

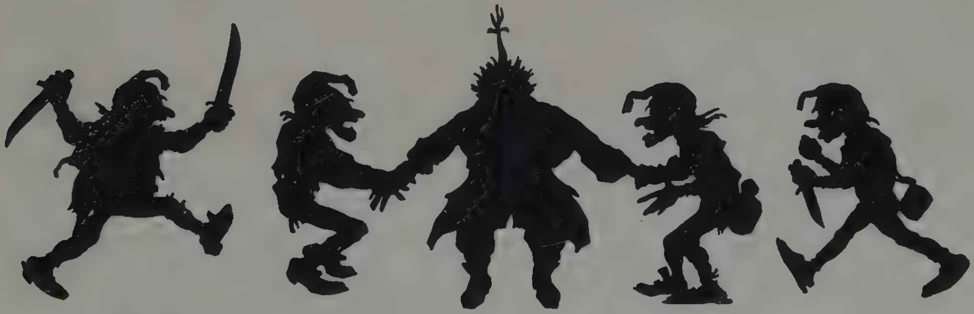
Then Summer came. And as the days grew longer and longer, the nights grew shorter and shorter; so that he had less and less time to leap from his Judge's gown into his robber garments and go robbing.

Day after day the sun set later and later, and the time of day that he was Judge crept closer and closer to the time of night when he was a robber. At last it began to stay light so much longer after dark than it did in the winter, and to grow bright so much earlier at dawn, that, being delayed in the mountains one morning by very heavy booty, he was overtaken and captured just as he was starting home. Overloaded with stolen plunder, his horses could move but slowly; so he was taken by the police, and thrown into the deepest dungeon in the castle.

At first it seemed very pleasant to be rid of so great a thief. But things soon came to a sorry pass. Being imprisoned as a robber, the Baron was, of course, unable either to hear or to dismiss the charges against himself. And, since he was the only Judge in all the land, it looked as if he would have to stay in jail forever. It was a strange predicament.

There being no one else to administer either justice or law, the country was soon in a bad way. Instead of one great robber, a countless multitude of little thieves sprang up and preyed upon the people till the nation groaned.

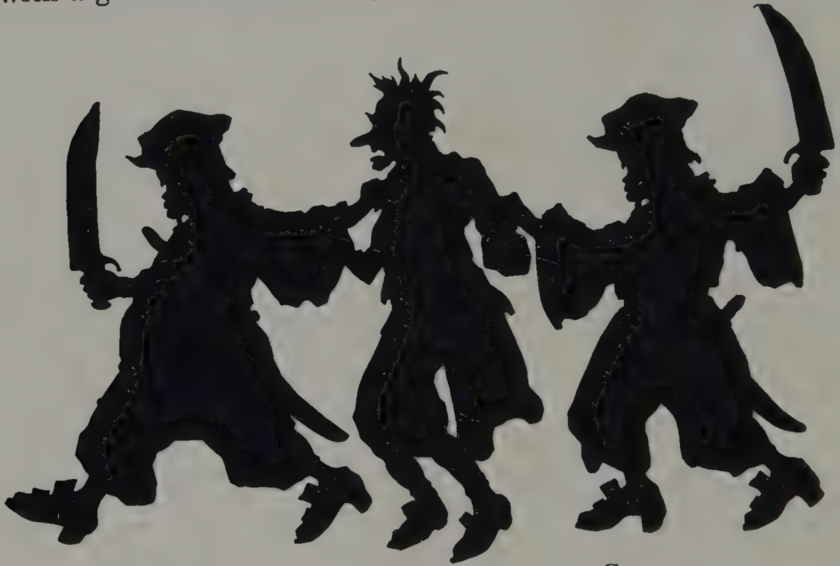
Everybody distrusted everybody else. Friends suspected friends. Strangers were thrown into prison on sight. The innocent were arrested on suspicion. The jails were full of prisoners. All this time the constabulary were starving; for there was nothing in the State Treasury with which to pay them, and even constables cannot live on air.



A Countless Multitude of Little Thieves Sprang Up.

This was the singular state of affairs when little Nick Sicklefoot landed on the coast.

He had scarcely reached the beach before he saw an ill-looking fellow with a great halberd staring out across the sea from the top of a sand-dune hard by. Nick at once hailed him. Now, this fellow was one of the coast-guard, who had had no pay for five years and little to eat for four. He had grown so thin that when he turned sidewise to see who called, Nick's eyes looked directly past him, one on each side, and did not see him at all. He appeared to have vanished utterly in air.

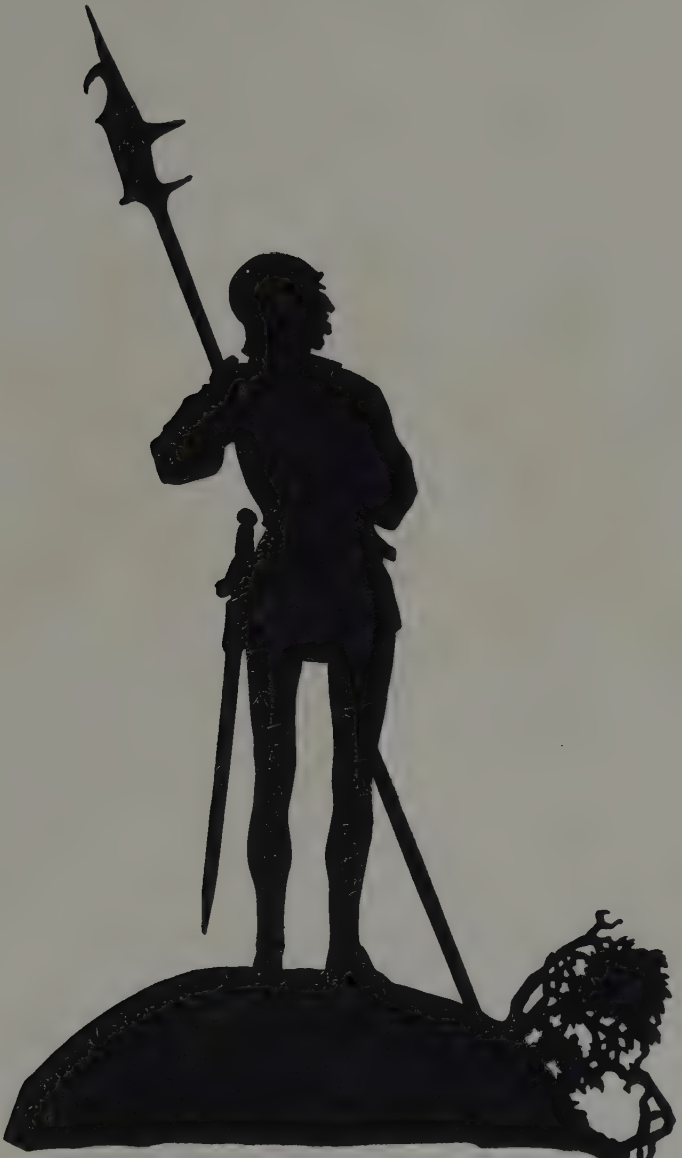


The Innocent Were Arrested on Suspicion.

"Great Land of the Living!" said Nick. "That's a singular thing! It cannot be healthy hereabouts. I think I'd better get out of this before I fade into nowhere myself."

He at once made off over the sand-dunes into the meadows beyond.

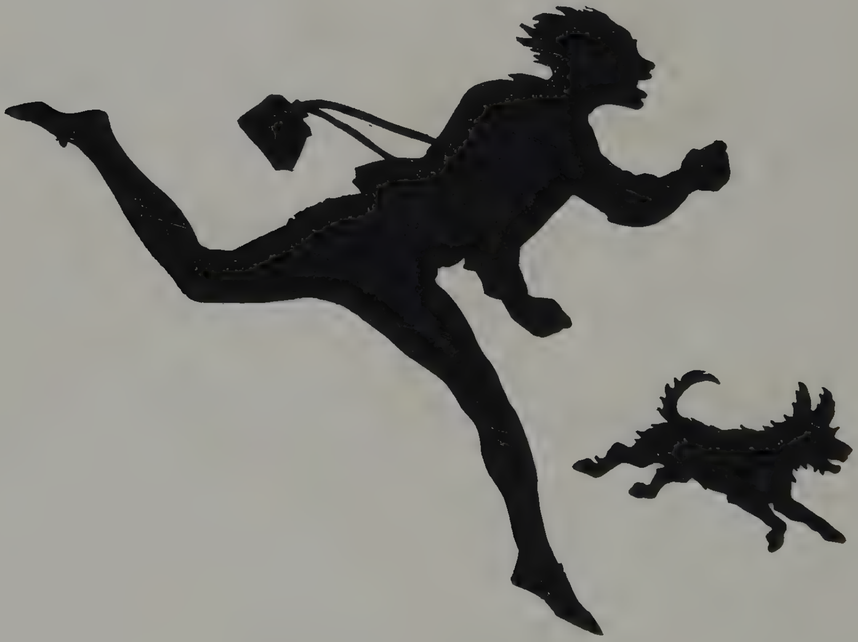
The instant he took to his heels the coast-guard pursued him. A man who runs at sight is usually a man who needs seeing to. By the time Nick had gone half a mile the whole coast-guard was at his heels,



An Ill-Looking Fellow With a Great Halberd.

bawling for him to stop. Nick, with one look at their long spears, pikes and halberds, only ran the faster.

Then all the shiremen, constabulary, sheriffs, deputies, and police took up the chase, raising the hue and cry until the dogs came running after and the blind beggars fell into the ditch getting out of the way. The children crawled under the bed. The mothers barred the doors. There was no refuge for little Nick but to run for his life. Run he did; for he was marvelously swift. Men had called him Sicklefoot because he fairly cut the wind.



Nick Took to His Heels.

With the whole countryful of constables whooping and hallooing at his heels he took off around a little hill so fast that as he came around the corner he saw his own back twice. Getting his second wind, he ran still faster. He passed his own shadow as if it had been standing still. Before he noticed where he was going, he overtook, ran into, and fell over the men who were pursuing him around the hill.

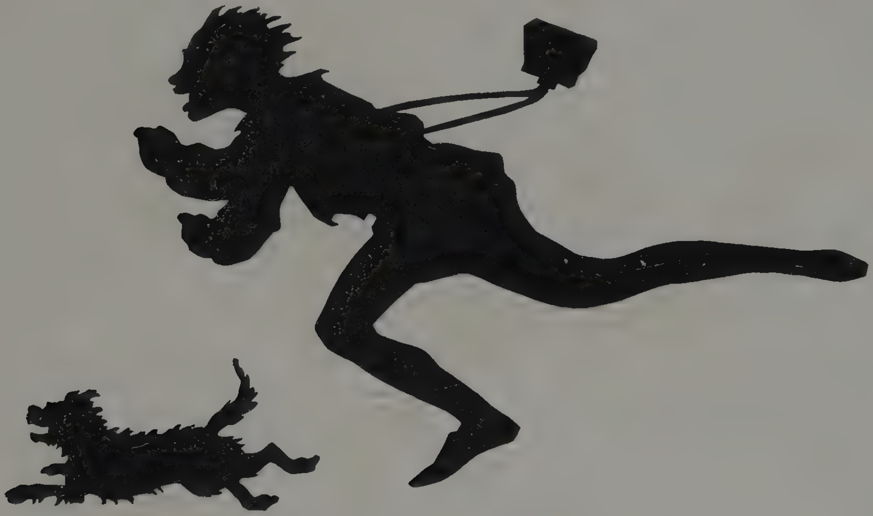
Instantly they laid hold upon him.

"What have I done?" he cried.

"That's what we want to know!" they shouted, waving their weapons. "What *have* you done?"

"Nothing," declared Nick, stoutly.

"Nothing?" they roared. "Then away with you to prison! It is these men who do nothing who are the ruin of our land! Put him in jail! He is surely a rascal. Just see how he ran!"



NICK RAN THE FASTER.

"What?" cried Nick. "Is a man a rascal for running?"

"Yes," they shouted in chorus.

"Well, then," cried Nick, indignantly. "You are all as much rascals as I. You, also, were running."

"Ah! but that is different. We were running after you; and you were running away!"

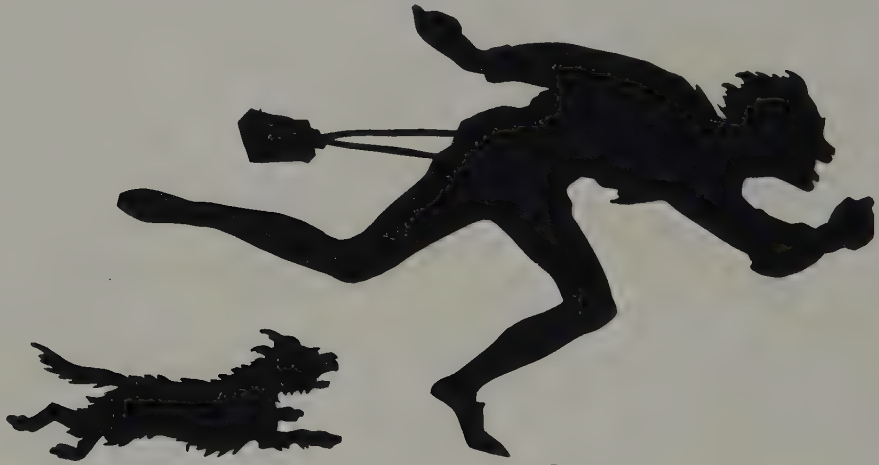
"Indeed?" said Nick. "Does running away make a rascal; and running after mark the officer of the law?"

"To be sure!"

"Then, look!" cried Nick. "Look you, now!" and he put his fore-finger in his palm as one who lays down a point. "Did *you* overtake *me?*"

"No," puffed the constables, "we did not. But what has that to do with the case?"

"Never you mind," said Nick. "Never you mind at all. Just to answer my questions frankly is all I shall ask of you. It was not you who overtook me. Was it not I who overtook you?"



NICK RAN FOR HIS LIFE.

"Suppose it was," growled the constables. "What of it?"

"What of it? Why, this. If I overtook you, I must have come up behind you."

"To be sure you did," said the constables.

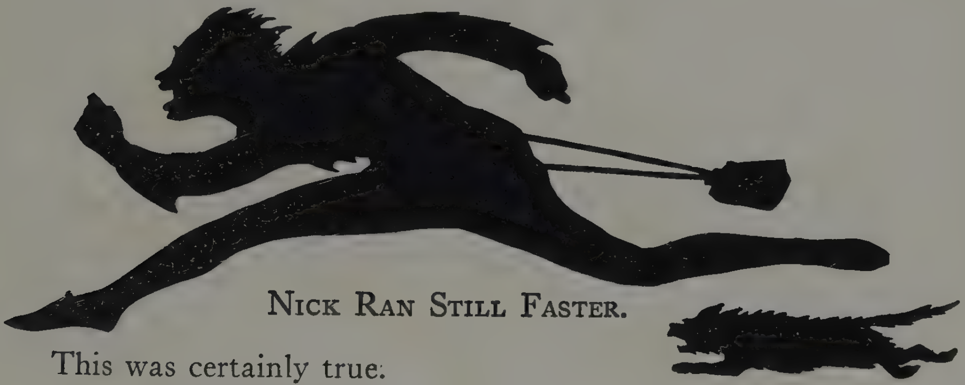
"Well, then," cried Nick. "If I came up from behind, and you went on before, was it not I who was running after, and you were running away?"

"Goodness me!" gasped the constables.

"And," said Nick, triumphantly, "if running away makes the rascal, and simply running after marks the officer of the law, as you yourselves have said, then you must be the rascals, and I the officer. You were ahead, I was behind. You ran; and I overtook you. Now, marry come up, you knaves. Off with you to jail, in the name of the law!"

Before the constables could collect their wits he had bundled them into prison and barred the great doors behind them.

"Sweet and blessed land of the living!" he panted, wiping the sweat from his brow. "It's a lucky thing this is the Land of the Impossible, or things could never have turned out thus!"



NICK RAN STILL FASTER.

This was certainly true.

"Now, what am I to do?" he pondered. "If I keep all these people in jail, there will be no one to run the country. If I let them out, they will lock me up. Dear me! what shall I do?"

"How should I know?" growled the prison-guard. "I am hired to keep people in jail; not to give advice. There they are, in jail; and there they stay till the Judge shall set them free."

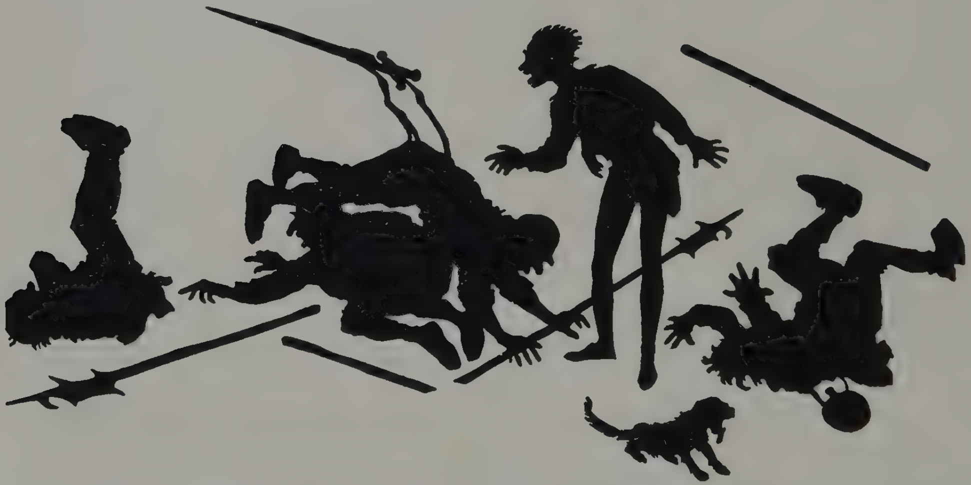
"The Judge!" cried Nick, hope rising in his breast. "Is there a Judge? Where is the Judge?"

"In the dungeon," replied the guard.

"The Judge in the dungeon? Well, of all queer countries!" Nick ran down the moldy stairs. Through the bars he could see the Baron moodily biting his fingers.

"Look you here, Sir Judge," said Nick firmly. "You must straighten this thing out! Everyone is in jail but the guard and me. I certainly am not going to let everyone out, and be thrown into prison myself. The guard is so busy guarding he has no time for governing. And I certainly cannot be expected to stay here alone, to run the nation, with all the nation in jail!"

"Well, what can I do?" growled the Baron, crossly kicking over his stool. "While I am locked up here as a robber, I cannot act as a Judge. Hence I cannot find out whether I am guilty or not; so that I cannot set myself free!"



Nick Ran Into and Fell Over the Men Who Were Pursuing Him.

"Why don't you compromise?"

"Compromise? How?"

"Why, give back the stolen gold to the Government for your release."

"You have just locked up the Government!"

Nick groaned in momentary despair.

"And now," said the Baron ruefully, "the Government cannot pardon me because it is in jail. And I cannot set the Government free because I am in jail myself. Dear me! what a mess you have made of it!"

"What a mess *I* have made of it?" cried Nick, indignantly. "How have *I* made a mess of it?"

"Why, you locked up the Government."

"To be sure I did! You did not expect me to go to jail myself?"

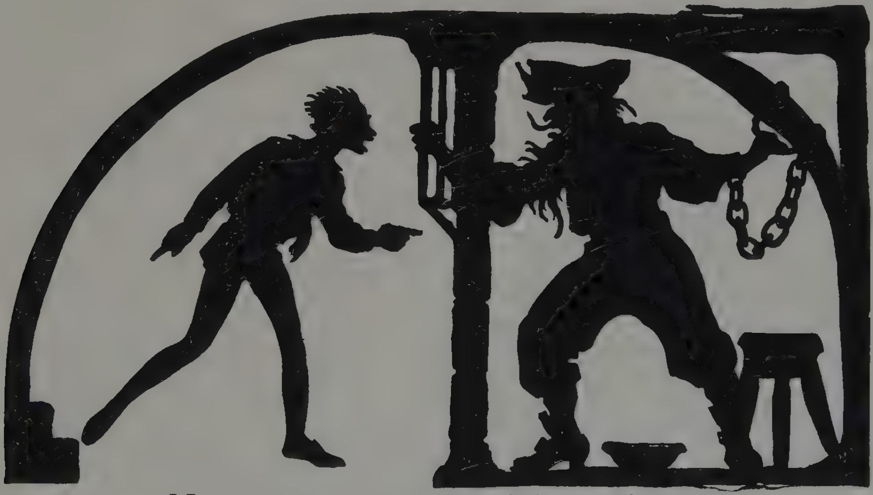
"No," said the Baron, sourly. "But the Government imprisoned me. And now you have imprisoned them. You're the only one left. So, you are responsible. You can't help yourself . . . you've got to face the crisis."

"I came here to find a fortune; not a crisis!" said Nick. "But if I must, why I must. I must unsnarl the tangle quickly."

"I should like to know how?" snapped the Baron contemptuously.

"Why," replied Nick, deeply pondering, "just call a special election, and elect a new free Government in place of the old one in jail. The new Government then may compromise with you for the return of the plunder, and pardon you out of prison. Then the new Government can resign; you can release the old Government; and all the world will be just as it was!"

"Oh, yes," said the Baron. "That sounds well. But with every-



Nick Ran Down the Moldy Stairs.
"Look You Here, Sir Judge," He Said.

body in jail, who is to hold the election? Who will elect? And who be elected?"

"I!" said Nick. "There is no one else but the guard; and he is too busy guarding."

So Nick ran quickly upstairs, and elected himself to all the public offices.

"Now, Sir Robber," said he cheerfully, through the dungeon-grate. "I . . . that is to say, *we* . . . the State Government, am . . . no; I mean *are* . . . ready to compromise for the return of the stolen treasure."

The Baron jumped up till his head bumped against the dungeon-roof.

"Hurrah!" cried he. "There will be enough to pay all of your salaries except that of janitor."

"All right," said Nick generously. "I won't insist on the janitor."

"But," said the Baron, with a puzzled frown, "what am I to do with the robber's clothes, his robbing tools and outfit, his mask, dark-lantern, and blunderbuss, his six swords and his pistol? They do not belong to me. I am no longer a robber. They cannot belong to the Judge. Judges may not receive stolen goods, nor accept rich presents from robbers."

"Well," suggested Nick, rubbing his chin thoughtfully, "since you cannot keep them yourself, why not start a museum for the encouragement of robber reform?"

"Hurrah!" cried the Baron. "That's just the thing. But where do you come in?"

"Oh, that," said Nick, with a sunny smile, "is very easily answered. I, the present State Government, shall present to me, Nicholas Sicklefoot, agent extraordinary, for services in the emergency, a fortune equal to or larger than any in Plumpington.

"Then we . . . that is, I . . . the new Government, will resign all our offices in favor of the old Government, now in jail, but which we will set free.

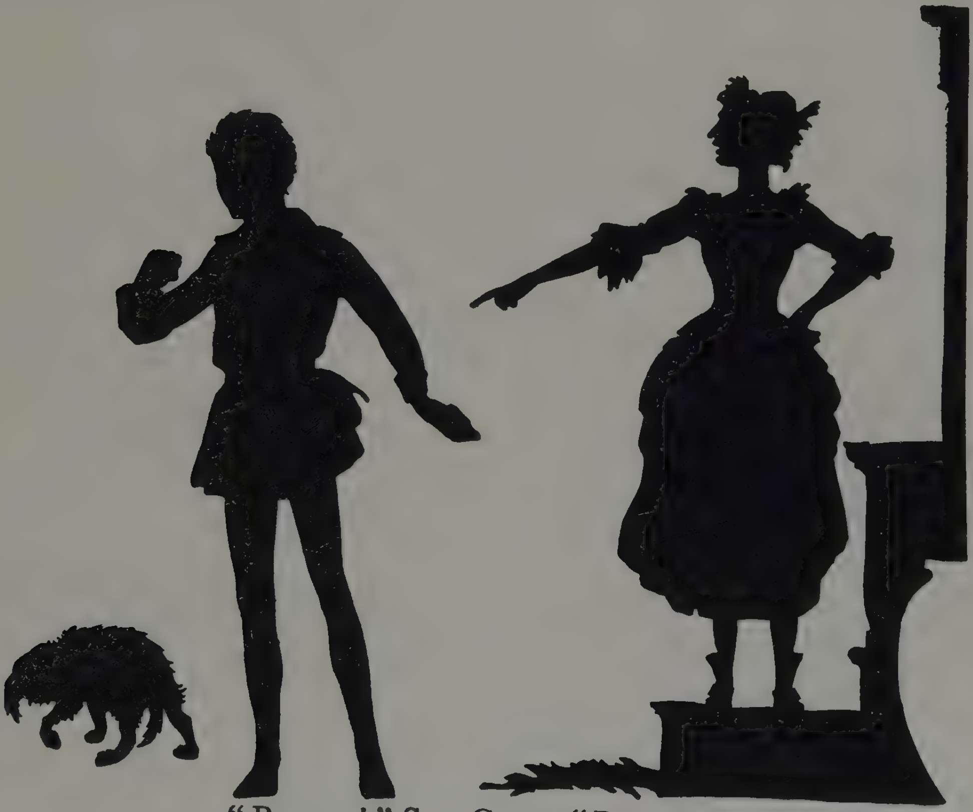
"Then I, as Nicholas Sicklefoot, being no more the Government, but the agent extraordinary, will accept the fortune offered me as pay for my services, and say 'Thank you very kindly, Sirs!'"

With that Nick put the money into his big bag-pocket.

"Now, let everybody out of prison!" he said. "The tangle is untangled."

"Ah-h!" sighed the Baron, as he released the delighted Government. "If only I had a brain like yours, I should never have been a robber, and should not now be subject to occasional deep remorse!"

But little Nick Sicklefoot, with his bag-pocket full of gold, was gone, on his way to Plumpington.

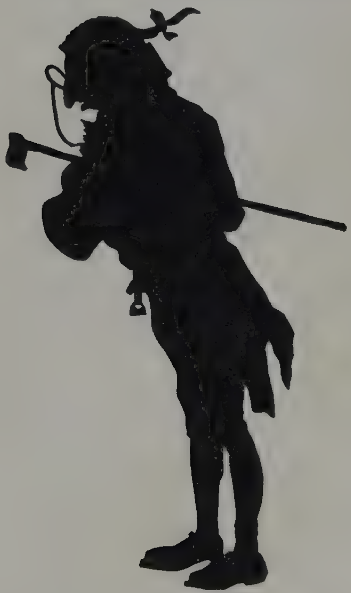


"Beggar!" She Cried, "Begone!"

The road was long and difficult. By the time he reached Middle Plumpington his clothing was faded and worn, and he was covered with dust.

When he came to the door of the blue-eyed girl with yellow plaits, "Beggar!" she cried. "Begone! Don't stand on my door-step, you scare-crow! None but the rich may stop here!"

Next day she married Sir Noodleby Trumpington. She made him morosely unhappy.



Sir Noodleby Trumpington

But her younger sister called to Nick as he sadly turned away:

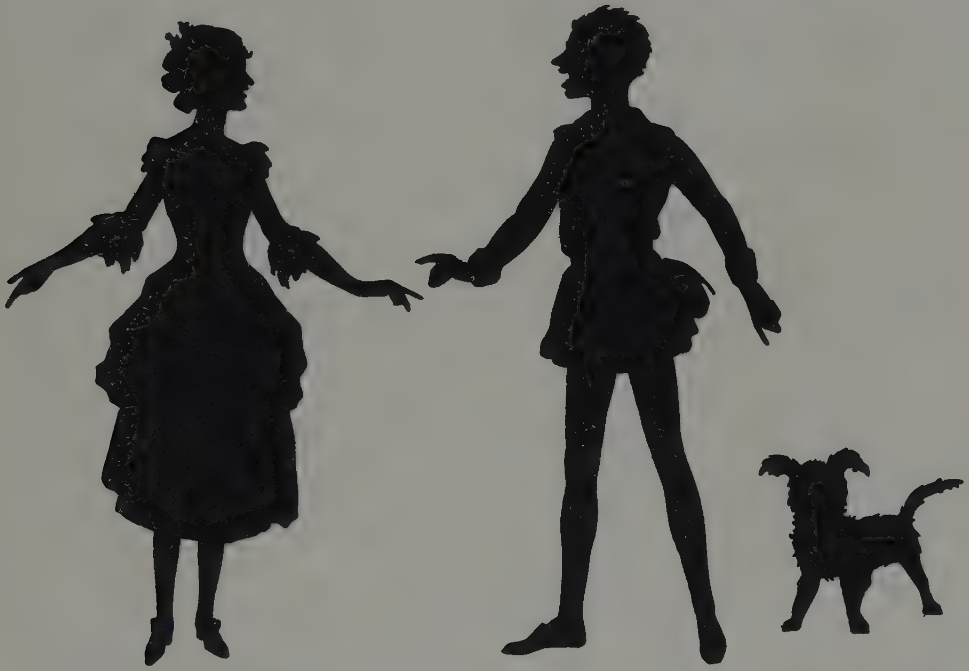
"Come to my door, poor lad!" she said. "For years I have wanted a scare-crow. Sit down there on my steps and rest; and I will give you a ginger-cake!"

She was prettier, far, than her sister. She did not sneer at his worn, old clothes, nor mind if they were faded. And she did not care for his fortune; though she said it might be a convenience. So they were married immediately. Nick built her a house far handsomer than Sir Noodleby's gorgeous mansion, and containing all new conveniences, including two pounds of wax-candles.

Sir Noodleby's wife bore no children; but Nick Sicklefoot's spouse bore six; in spite of which, or, perhaps, because, they were extraordinarily happy.

It was said that Nick so far forgave his unpleasant stepfather as to send him after-cards to the wedding, with a slice of the wedding-cake. But this is not positive.

After a while there came a letter to Nick from his friend, the penitent Robber-Baron — an explanatory letter. The penitent Baron said he had formed a partnership with a reformed pirate for the manufacture of tidies, which they knitted in the monotonous intervals of an otherwise unoccupied life. They had shipped, as a wedding-present to Nick and his bride, two thousand worsted tidies, baled, upon a passing ship. The merchant vessel unfortunately was lost in a storm at sea. From the penitent partnership Nick never heard again. So, until the end, his home remained untidied, but quite happy.



HER YOUNGER SISTER CALLED TO NICK. "COME TO MY DOOR, POOR LAD!" SHE SAID.

The Cat, the Cow, the Dog and the Dairymaid

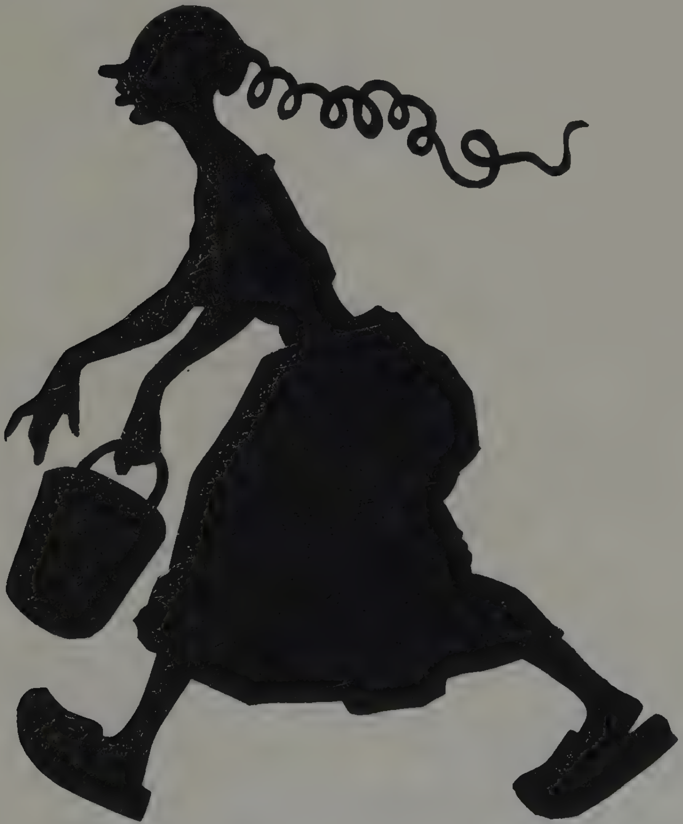
A Tragical Ballad

HAVE YOU heard the singular aria
That is sung in the Courts of Bavaria,
Of the Cat, Dog, and Cow,
The hay from the mow,
And the Girl from the buttermilk Dairy? A
Singular thing
For a grave Court to sing!
But this was a Court in Bavaria.

The Milkmaid's cog-no-men was Nelly.
She was sweeter than jessamine jelly;
One long golden curl
Revolved, whirl after whirl,
Like a corkscrew of tough vermicelli;
And, of course, she had two
Eyes, of ravishing blue,
Renowned from Gibraltar to Delhi.

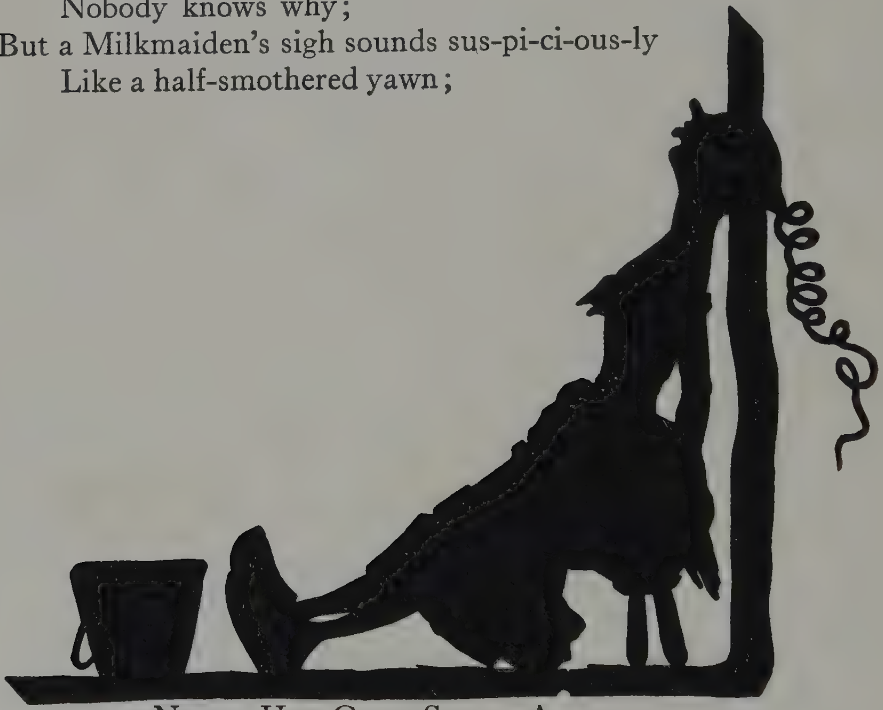
THE CAT, THE COW, THE DOG AND THE DAIRYMAID

Now Nelly went down to the Dairy . . . a
Habit they have in Bavaria . . .
To de-lac-tate the Cow:
Hence arose the tow-row
Which upset the High Courts of Bavaria.
(Time out of mind,
If you notice, you'll find
Lovely woman's the cause of laws upon laws
Being broken to bits . . .
In Bavaria).



Now Nelly Went Down to the Dairy.

The milk Nelly drew most deliciously
Perfumed the air. In-ju-di-ci-ous-ly
    It foamed over the pail . . .
    So it says in the tale . . .
As fair Nelly sat milking, ca-pri-ci-ous-ly
    Heaving a sigh;
    Nobody knows why;
But a Milkmaiden's sigh sounds sus-pi-ci-ous-ly
    Like a half-smothered yawn;



NELLY HAD GONE SOUND ASLEEP.

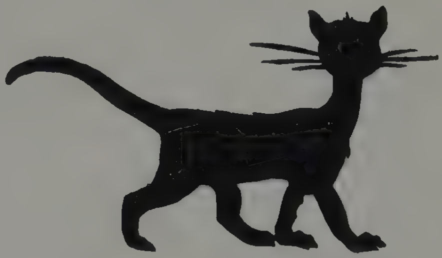
Do not blame Nelly: so did Bopeep, and Little Boy Blue; and also Miss Eleanor Bly.

    And . . . well . . . Nelly had gone
Sound asleep. When a Cat, sur-rep-ti-tious-ly
    Through the barn passing by,
    Cast a pre-da-cious eye . . .
The horizon seemed cleared so aus-pi-ci-ous-ly!
    With tread soft as silk

All good Bavarian dairies are now equipped with an automatic SCAT!

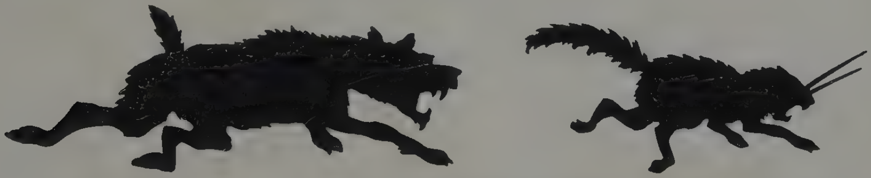
The Cat made for the Milk,
In the milk-pail squishing deliciously.

But, while creeping thus stealthily, viciously,
Puss felt a cold chill su-per-sti-ti-ous-ly . . .
A sensation of fear,
Saying "*Danger is near!*"
Ah! that fresh milk should smell so deliciously!



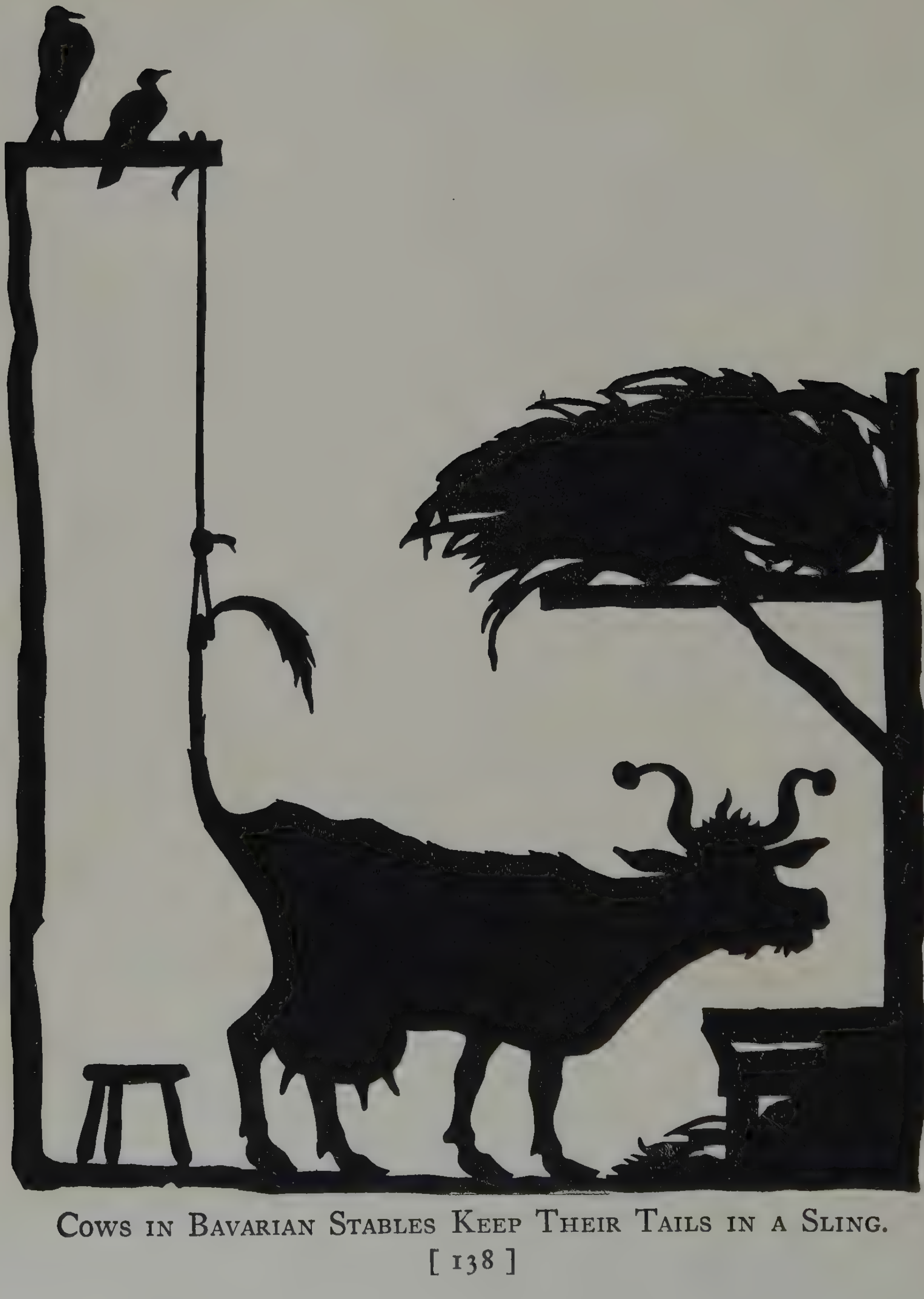
The Cat Casts a Pre-da-cious Eye.

At her heels, with a yelp most alarming,
An e-nor-mous Watch-Dog came storming,
With a yap and a yell
And a yowl . . . *ffitzzz!* Pell-mell
The Cat for the hay-mow went swarming.



At Her Heels an Enormous Watch-Dog Came Storming.

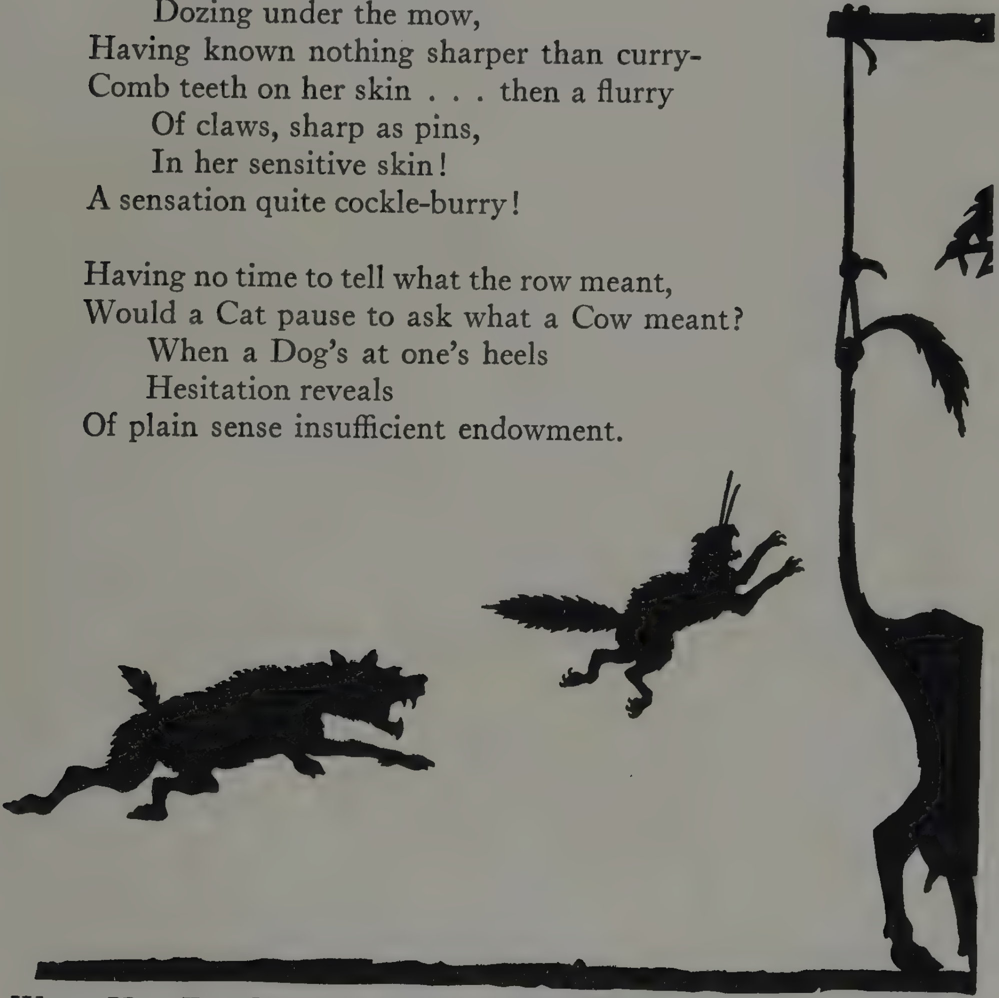
Now, in all true legends and fables,
The Cows, in Bavarian stables,
Keep their tails in a sling,
That the tails may not swing . . .
Suspended somehow from the gables.
I believe this in some way enables
The Milk-maids, in Bavarian stables,
To sit close to the Cow . . .
Anyway, that was how
This Cow's tail was tied up to the gables.



Cows in Bavarian Stables Keep Their Tails in a Sling.

Up the Cow went the Cat, fluffed and furry,
Tooth and claw, for her life, in a hurry,
    Arousing Sis' Cow
    From her dreams, by the row!
Now, imagine the Cat, fluffed and furry;
    And imagine the Cow,
    Dozing under the mow,
Having known nothing sharper than curry-
Comb teeth on her skin . . . then a flurry
    Of claws, sharp as pins,
    In her sensitive skin!
A sensation quite cockle-burry!

Having no time to tell what the row meant,
Would a Cat pause to ask what a Cow meant?
    When a Dog's at one's heels
    Hesitation reveals
Of plain sense insufficient endowment.



With Her Fur Deathly Pale, Pussy Climbed the Cow's Tail.

As Puss flew each terrific *miaouw* meant
"Excuse haste! Excuse claws!
I have no time to pause!"
And her last flying leap for the mow meant
"P. P. C.: — Sister Cow,
I'm en route for the mow;
And have no time to tell what the row meant!"

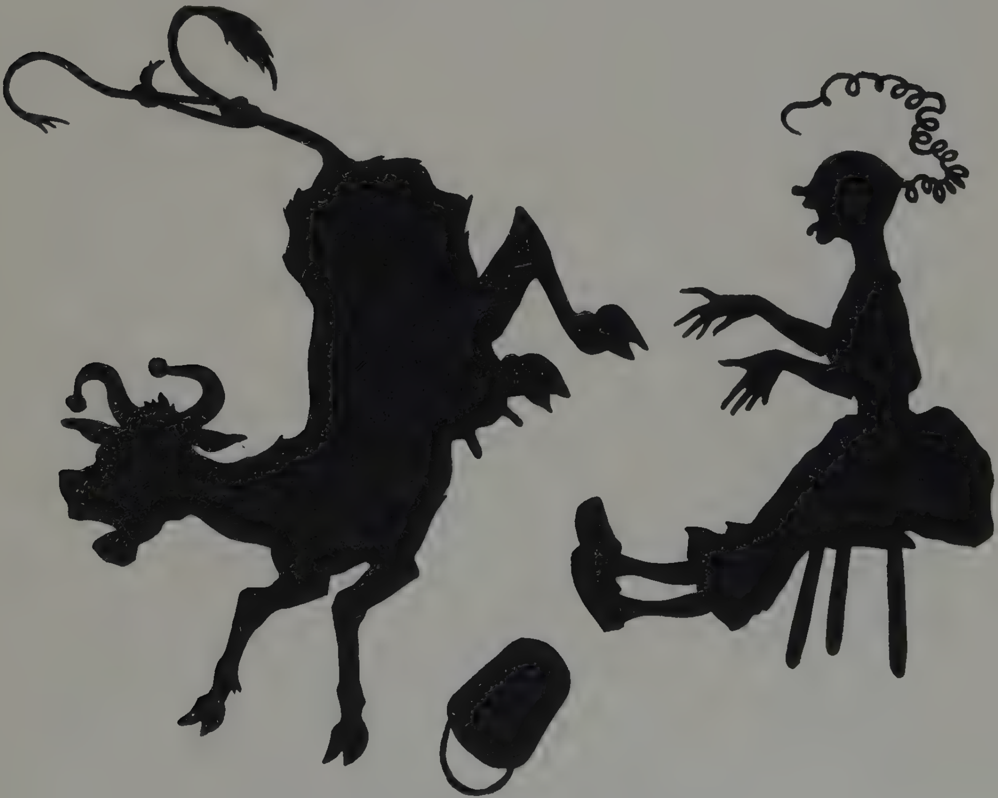
It is certainly useless to mention,
When one keeps a Cow's tail in suspension
'Tis a trick to prevent
Its original bent;
Not to provide Cats a means of ascension.

Thus the Cat up the Cow took her way to the mow,
Like the Fox from the Well, in the Fables.
With her fur deathly pale
Pussy climbed the Cow's tail,
Heading straight for the top of the stables.
If one scratch a Cow's nose
What do you suppose
Would occur in the calmest of stables?
Well, the Cat scratched her *tail!* . . .
She kicked over the pail
And popped her sus-pen-so-ry cables!

With a volley of kicks and a bellow,
Over went the Milk-maid with a yell, "Oh!
For goodness' sake, now,
What's come over the Cow?"
With a shriek like a violoncello
That is very ill-played,
Over went stool and Maid
On the floor, with a dolorous bellow;

While the Cat with a yell
Came down headlong, pell-mell,
With a thump like a funeral knell, O!

In pools on the ground
The milk ran all around,
As they lay on the ground where they fell, O!
Cat, Cow, Maid, and Cur,
Heaps of hay, clouds of fur,
Dust and straw, petticoat-frills, and bellow!

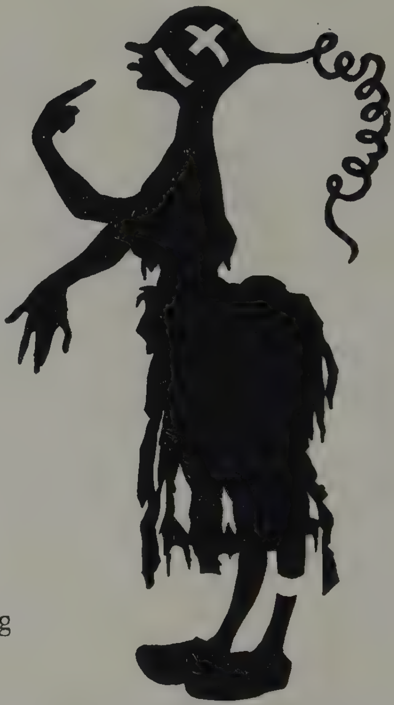


"For Goodness' Sake, Now,
What's Come Over the Cow?"

THE CAT, THE COW, THE DOG AND THE DAIRYMAID

Poor old Sister Cow
Had her heels in the mow,
Her head on the ground, with a bench on
Her back, and the feet of the wench on
The nape of her neck;
All the stall in a wreck,
And the over-turned pail all a-drench on
The floor of the stall,
Nearly drowning them all
In that wild and unhappy convention.

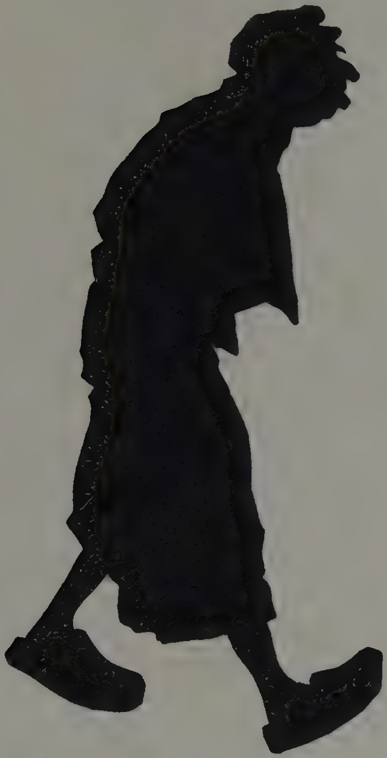
To the Court the case came for a hearing,
The village applauding and jeering
The Hay from the Mow,
The Cat, Dog, and Cow;
And poor Nelly, in plasters appearing,
Asked damage, for bruising and smearing
For her badly-bumped nose,
Her much-crumpled clothes,
And her left elbow slipped out of gearing.



Poor Nelly in Plasters Appearing.

And, oh! the unfortunate Dairy-man!
He looked very far from a merry man,
Regarding his loss,
Gathered, unlike the moss
On a rolling-stone . . . unhappy Dairy-man!

The Lawyers, all tacking and veering,
Quite twisted the law out of gearing,
Now for t'ane, now for t'other,
This way, then the other,
Like a strip of old rubber veneering.
The evident Truth of the matter



The Unfortunate Dairy-Man.

Grew flatter and flatter and flatter;
And every conclusion
But increased the confusion,
Like the spoon in the breakfast-cake batter.

It is useless to try to describe how they went on;
They so bent the intent of the Law which they leant on
You'd have thought they were trying to balance a cent on
The invisible point of a needle.

The Beadle
And Bailiff wrote large in
Black ink, round the margin,
Red ink down the middle,
Till their pens popped
And hopped
Like peas on a griddle.

Each Attorney took notes from the books in his poke,
Referred to Lord Co'burn, to Blackstone, and Coke: . . .
A joke on the folk
Who stood out in the area;
For black-stones and coke
Meant just hard coal and smoke
To the plain village-folk in the area:
And that's a very good joke . . . in Bavaria.

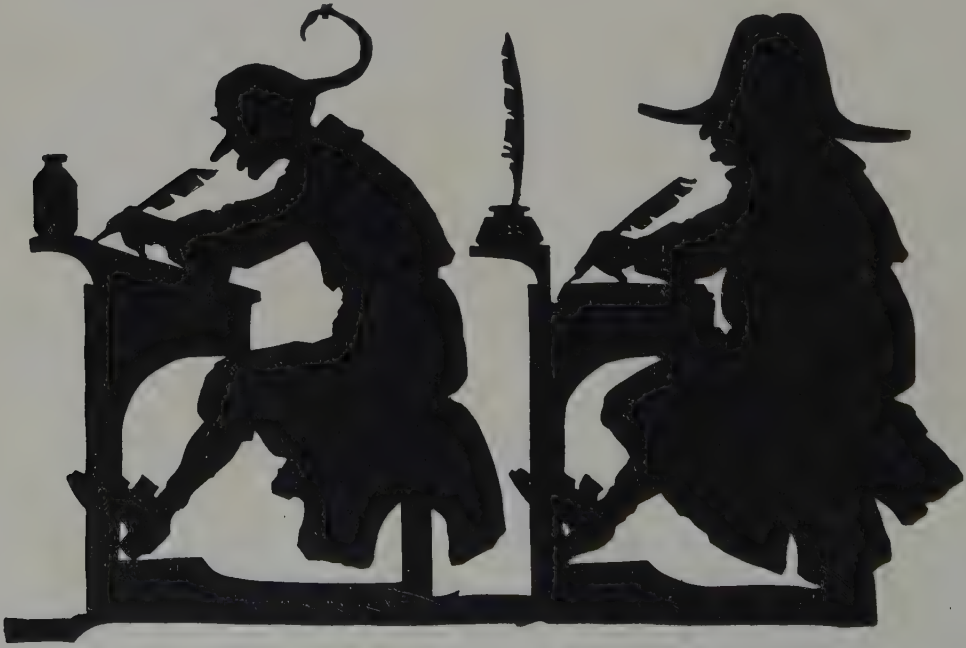
When it came to the Jury
The Abbé and Curé

Debated like fury,
And all but fought, died, and bled;
While the sulky Excise-man
Contradicted the Wise Man
In every wise thing he said;
Until, said the Wise Man
To the Excise-man:

"FUDGE!"

Which so astonished the Curé
And bewildered the Jury
That they passed the case back to the Judge.

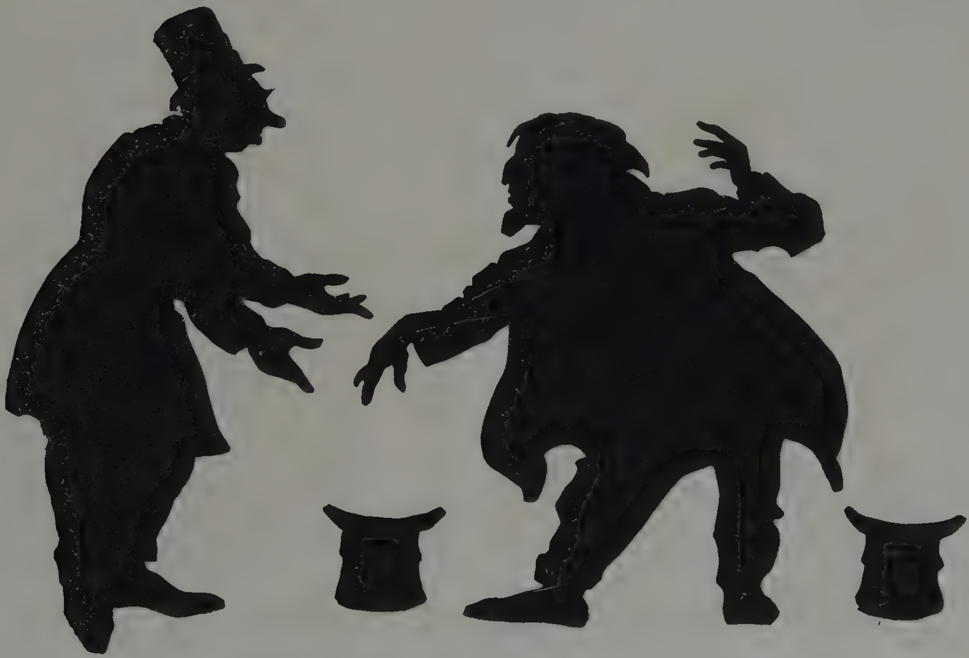
The Judge, of the highest gentility,
Renowned for his legal ability,



THE BEADLE AND BAILIFF WROTE LARGE.

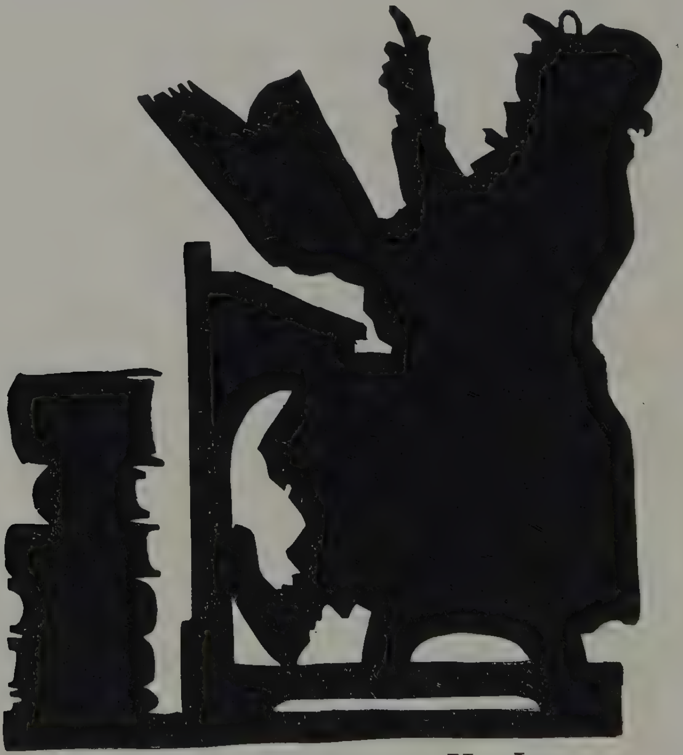
Said: the Court must allow
That Cat, Dog, and Cow
Were equally, sequelly guilty;
But as for the Milk which was spilt, he
Could not affirm which one was guilty:
He could quote forty laws
Each confirming a clause
But he could not affirm who was guilty.

And when he came down to fair Nelly,
Her beauty so went to his head,
His voice grew so weak
That he scarcely could speak
And nobody could hear *what* he said.



The Sulky Excise-Man Contradicted the Wise Man.

What damage was due from the Dairy-man
    To the Milk-maid they could not decide,
The Pros-e-cu-tion affirmed so much
    That De-fend-ant's Counsel denied.
Who should pay what . . . Milk, Maiden, and Hay?
Dog-latin. Whom to lay *malum* on



The Judge Renowned for His Legal Ability.

    Might puzzle King Solomon,
Wise as he was in his day.

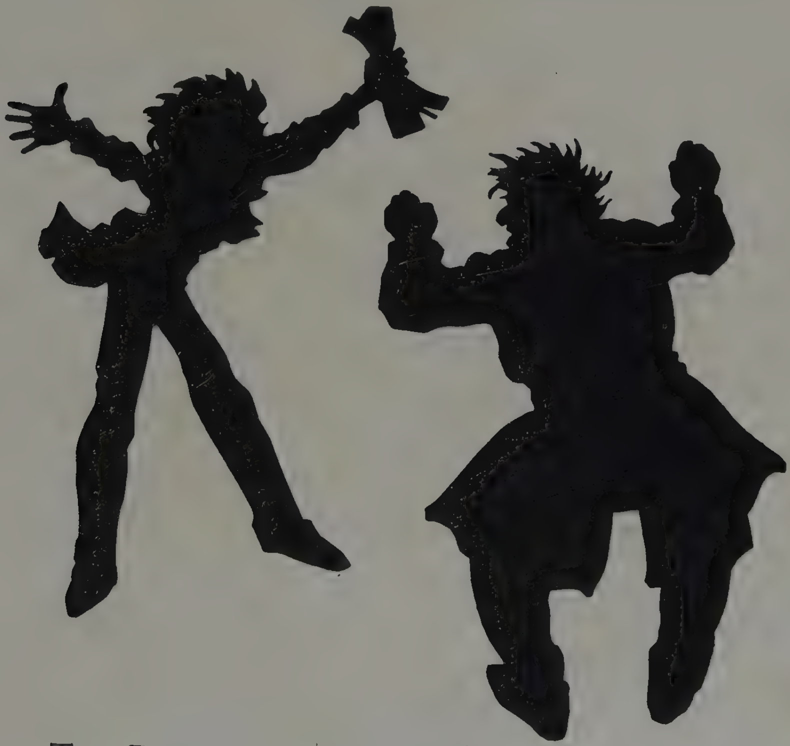
So they fined the Dog his bark;
    And they took from the Cat her mew;

But, when they came down to the Dairy-maid,
They did not know what to do.

But, while they wrangled and quibbled
And argued, but could not decide,
The Dairy-man courted the Dairy-maid,
And made her his bonny bride.

There was nothing left but the bucket of milk,
A bottle of double-cream,
And a cracked victrola record
Of the Milk-maid's frightened scream.

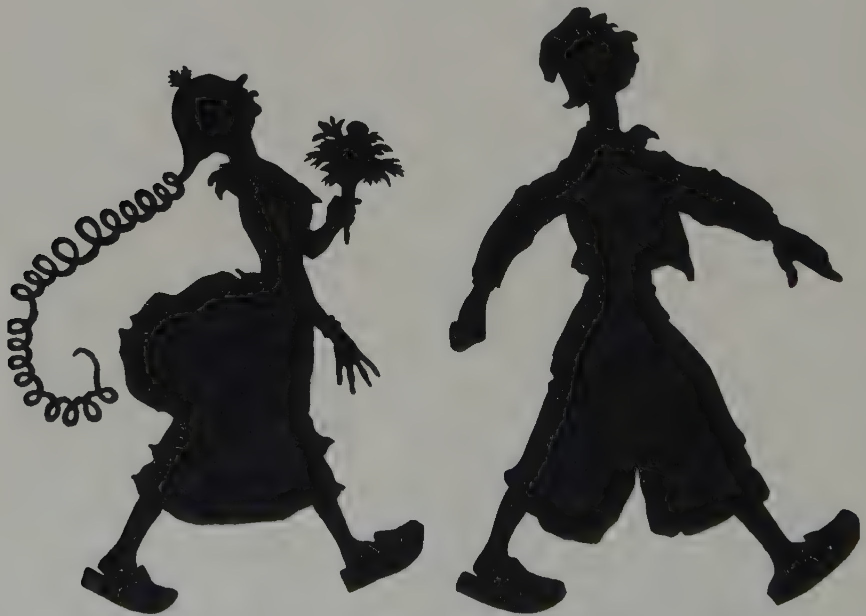
'Twas Bavarian cream, of course.



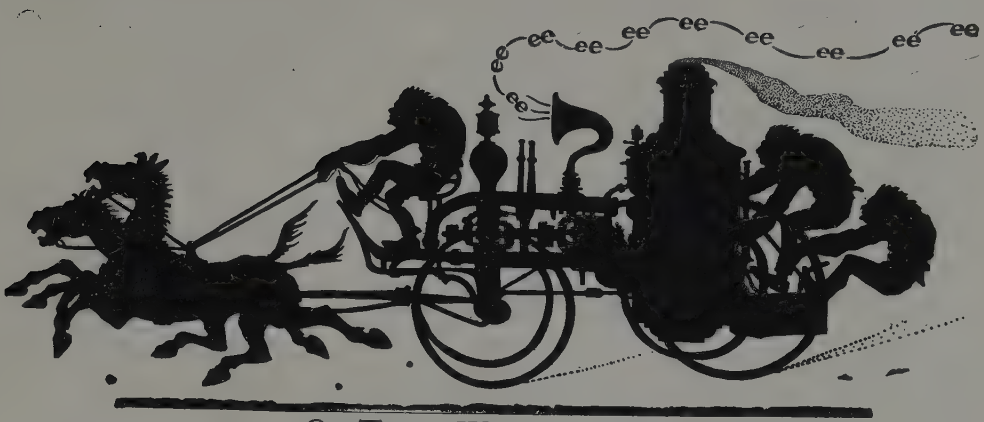
The Prosecution Affirmed So Much That Defendant's Counsel Denied.

The Lawyers drank all the milk;
The Judge drank all the cream;
And the Fire Department of the town
Borrowed the Milk-maid's scream,
And toggled it to their Engine
With ingenious cords and wheels,
So that, when they ran to a fire,
It emitted continuous squeals.

They sold this patent arrangement
To a man by the name of Royce,
Who became most stu-pend-ous-ly wealthy
Retailing the MILK–MAID'S VOICE
For use upon Fire-engines,
Ladder-trucks, and Reels,



The Dairy-Man Made Nellie His Bonny Bride.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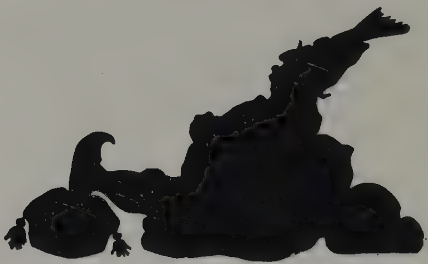
On Their Way to a Fire

That they, on their way to a fire,
Shall utter continuous squeals.

So, now, all you timorous infants,
Accustomed to startle and cry
At the sound of the Fire-engine
In the Black Night rolling by,
Go back to your dreams like good children,
Bidding your hearts rejoice;
For your infantile terror is based upon error:
It is only the MILK–MAID'S VOICE.

Good-night, all!

The Persian Columbus



ONE exceedingly sultry evening in the eight hundred and seventieth year of the Mohammedan era, the renowned Caliph, Haroun Al Huck El Berri, of Chunder-abad-dad, sat frowning darkly among his magnificence.

The royal divan was fashioned of ruddy gold, thick-studded with virgin pearls. Overhead was an exquisite carved dome of ivory and ebony, radiant with the glow of swaying brazen lamps and tall wax candles. Rich carpets of silk and velvet were scattered over the jasper floor, which reflected the alabaster columns. Tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl were spread with rare and aromatic viands, while the shimmering breezes were cooled and faintly perfumed by fountains of rose-water.

But, in spite of all this surrounding splendor, the Caliph was unmistakably as cross as two sticks, and champed his teeth savagely.

Through the open windows stole the silvery song of the nightingale and the sleepy trill of the belated bulbul in the orange grove beyond the courtyard. From the high gallery entrancing strains of music swept, above which arose the mellow snore of the Grand Vizir, snoozing among damask cushions, with a copy of the Bagdad *Herald* over his face.

And yet, with a fierce frown upon his pale brow, the Caliph pored over the dog-eared pages of his primary geography.

Suddenly he closed the book with a bang.

"By the six white hairs upon the tail of the Prophet's mule!" quoth he, "these be strange tales indeed that the unlettered giaours of the West are telling the wise men of the East! Can it be possible that the whole Persian system of eclectic geography is in error? I must investigate this matter. Selim!" he cried imperiously to the Grand Vizir, who scrambled to his sleepy feet with a frightened start. "Summon the Seven Sages and the Commissioner of Public Schools!"

The Sages were summoned instantly.

"Bah! You high-salaried indolents!" sternly hissed the Caliph, "I've a great notion to discharge you all! Aren't you ashamed to let the pale-faced Franks of Spain get ahead of you?"

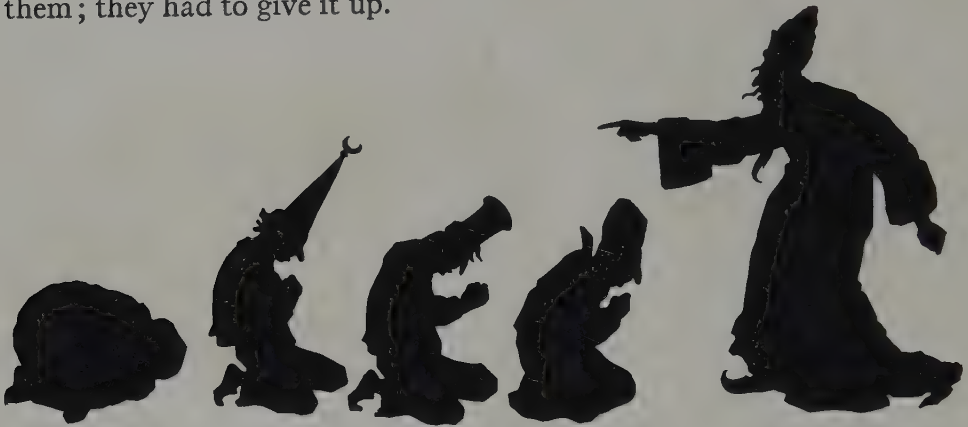
"Illustrious Sun of the Noonday!" faltered the oldest among them, "what means this sudden tempest out of a clear sky? The Frankish philosophers do not know even the things which we have forgotten. They are but followers in our foot-steps. We have taught them all they know."

"Oh, have you?" roared the Caliph. "Perhaps, then, ye knew that the world is round?"

"Oh, your Majesty!" gasped the sages in chorus, while three of them hid behind the alabaster columns, endeavoring to restore their paralyzed faculties with their smelling-salts. "What sort of a fairy-tale is this?"

"Fairy-tale?" roared the Caliph. "Marry, come up! Don't ye ever read the newspapers? Have ye not heard that there has arisen in the West a wild, strange, white-haired man who saith the world is round like an orange or a ball? If ye did not know it, why have ye not found it out long ago? And if ye did know it, why have ye not told me of it before this? Tell me," cried the Caliph in an awful, bloodcurdling tone, " tell me, ye ignoramuses, is the world round or flat? "

The Sages fell prostrate upon the gleaming floor, and bumped their aged heads against the tiles in despair. The riddle was too much for them; they had to give it up.



" TELL ME," CRIED THE CALIPH, " TELL ME, IS THE WORLD ROUND OR FLAT? "

With a cruel glitter in his eagle eye the Caliph cried to the Chief Chamberlain: " Hassan, lock these gentlemen up in the pantry instantly, and be very careful that not one escapes. I will give them fifteen minutes in which to tell me positively whether the world be round or flat; or give me some immediately practicable method of finding out. And if they can do neither . . . brrr-rr-ooo! " He gritted his teeth horridly.

The massive, burnished copper door closed with a dismal clang upon the unfortunate and despairing Sages; while the School Commissioner, arriving just in time to hear the latter part of the conversation from the hall-door, took to his heels, and did not stop until he was three miles beyond the city limits and hidden under a hay-stack.

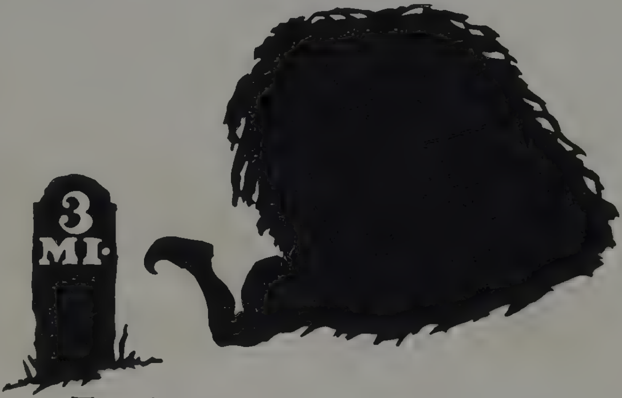
Then the court waited in ominous silence, as the sand in the hourglass trickled out the swiftly passing moments. The horizon began to look very squally for the Seven Sages.

The Caliph sat sullenly upon the divan, playing with an orange. Suddenly he gave a start, and an immense white smile illuminated his swarthy features. "Selim!" he called. "Look here, my boy! If this world be indeed round, as this imaginative mariner from Genoa declares, it will not be so difficult to prove, methinks."

The Vizir eyed the Caliph with suspicion.

"If I begin here," continued the Caliph, placing his index finger upon the orange, "and move onward, my finger soon completely passes around the orange and returns to the point whence it started. Dost see?"

"Verily, your Majesty, I am not blind!" said the Vizir, warily refusing to commit himself further. "I see clearly."



THE SCHOOL COMMISSIONER HIDDEN UNDER A HAY-STACK.

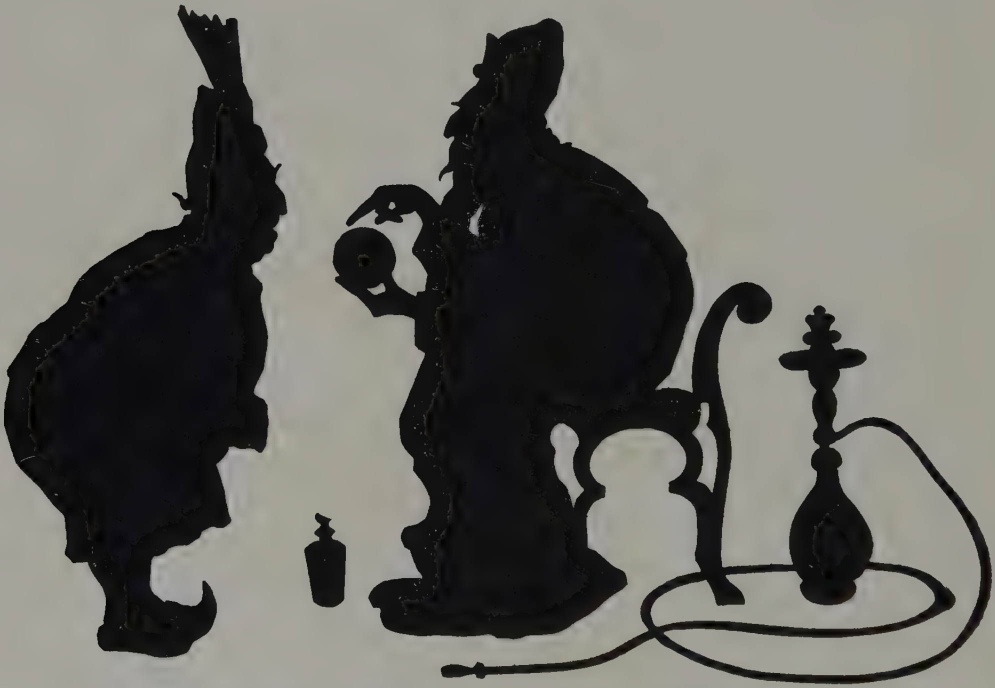
"Well then?" said the Caliph expectantly, looking at Selim.

"Well then?" said Selim dubiously, looking at the Caliph, and edging toward the door.

"Pshaw! Thou dolt! Dost not see that if this world be indeed round like this orange, a man may ride around it and return whence he started? Bismillah! I have solved the problem myself! Aha! I will fool these laggard, hesitating Franks; I will show this audacious Christoval Colon that he is but a semicolon after all. I will ride around the world myself, this very night, and thou shalt go with me, Selim; thou shalt go with me, and we will ride around the world! Make haste, and call up the camels. Hurrah! We are going around the world!"

"Oh, we are, are we?" muttered Selim, with chattering teeth, as he hurriedly shuffled down the back stairs to the stable, to harness up the royal equipage. "Around the world, indeed? Who wants to fall over the edge into nothing? Not Selim! I should say not. Not if Selim knows it!"

Then followed a scene of wild excitement, some hurrying hither and thither, some scurrying backward and forward, some running round and round, and some running nowhere at all; while hoarse voices shouted, camels snorted, horses neighed, and countless dogs barked until the whole city was in an uproar. Drums beat, spears swayed madly overhead, standards flapped frantically upon their swaying staves, dark faces gleamed with savage excitement from under



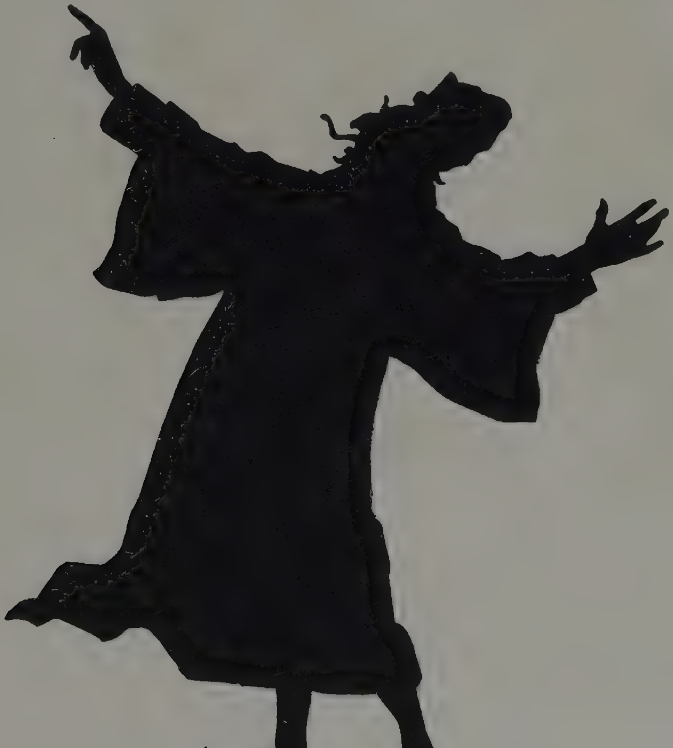
"MY FINGER SOON PASSES COMPLETELY AROUND THE ORANGE. DOST THOU SEE?"

snowy turbans. And then came a wilder clang from the deafening cymbals, a louder fanfare from the brazen-throated trumpets, and a mighty shout from the throats of the excited populace. "Hail to the Caliph! Hail, all hail! For he is going round the world!"

Then the royal band struck up "Marching Through Persia," the small boys turned cart-wheels along the gutter, and the procession moved on.

Beyond the city gates the caravan halted.

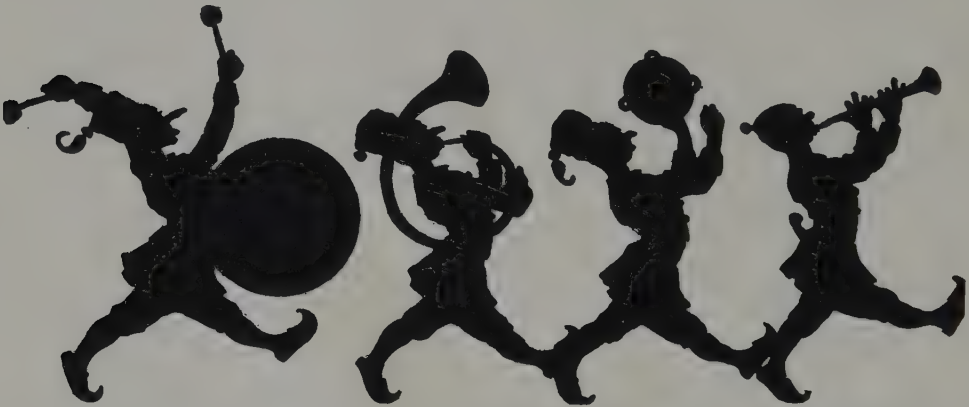
"Your royal highness," asked Selim the Vizir, "which way shall we start — north, east, south, or west?"



"Hurrah, We Are Going Around the World."

"Hm-m-m!" mused the Caliph, stroking his beard thoughtfully, and getting out his railroad map of the Eastern Hemisphere.

"Hm-m-m!" resumed the Caliph, after a short study. "We will not go to the west; for Ferdinand and Isabella would be sure to see us marching past their house, and I want to surprise them by getting all the way around before they know anything about it. And we will not go to the east; because we should get too close to the sun when it rises in the morning, and might perhaps be sunstruck. And if we go to the south, we shall have to ford the Indian Ocean. I don't like to wade; the stones hurt my bare feet; so I think we won't go south. Hm-m-m! That leaves only one other direction to go. Well then, we will go in that direction. Ho, Gaifar!" he called in a ringing voice to the drum-major at the head of the procession. "March straight for the North Star!"

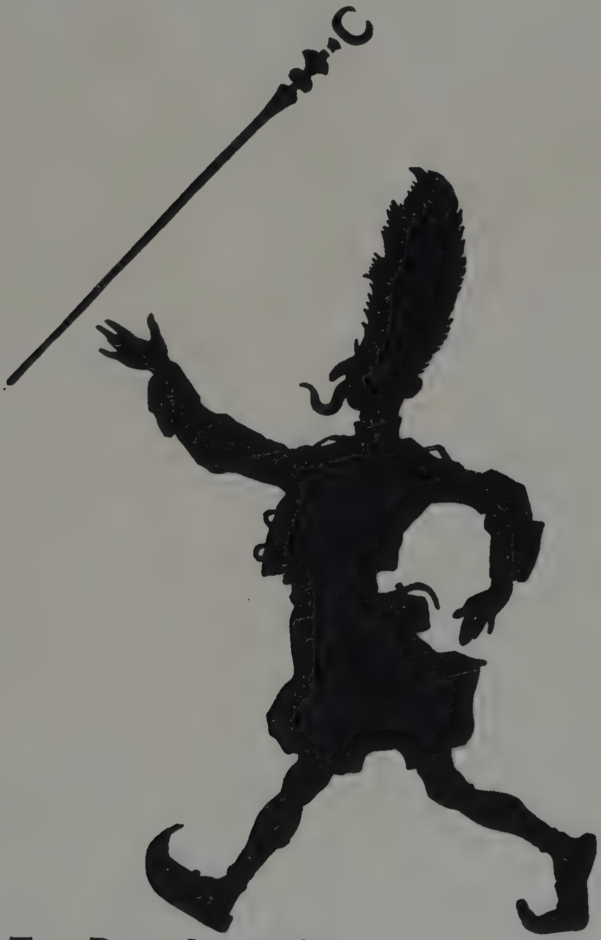


THE ROYAL BAND STRUCK UP "MARCHING THROUGH PERSIA."

Then he went sound asleep, as Gaifar tossed his baton high in air, caught it deftly as it fell, gave a triple flip-flap to the right, a double flub-dub to the left, and thirteen twirls around his little finger. The band struck up, and the cavalcade headed across the broad, sandy plain, straight for the North Star.

As the hills along the horizon drew nearer and nearer, the Grand

Vizir broke into a cold perspiration. He stood erect on his camel, craning his neck above the clouds of dust. He could see the far sky curve down, down, down, on the other side of those purple mountain-peaks. "Ugh-hh!" he gasped, with a shudder of terror. "Something must be done, and right away, too! There is the end of the world; and we will all fall off and be smashed, sure!"



THE DRUM-MAJOR TOSSES HIS BATON IN THE AIR.

Making his way in palpitating haste to the side of the drum-major, he whispered with terrible impressiveness, " Gaifar, what do you know about as-tron-o-my? "

" I? Nothing! " said Gaifar, surprised.

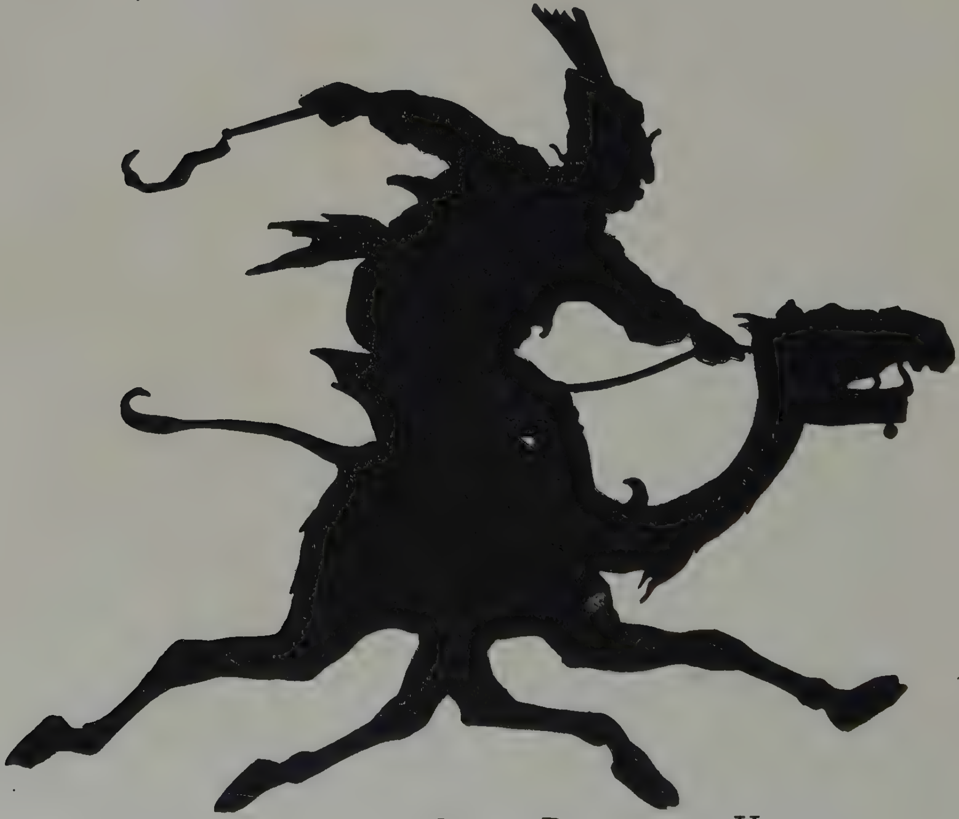
" Oo-ooh! " groaned the Vizir, pulling a long face. " I should not like to be in your shoes when the Caliph wakes! "

" Why not? " asked Gaifar anxiously.

But the crafty Vizir made no reply.

" Gaifar," he whispered sepulchrally, " have you ever studied bacter-i-ol-o-gy? "

" N-no, indeed! " stammered Gaifar, with startled eyes.



Selim Makes His Way in Palpitating Haste.

"Oo-oo-ooh!" the Vizir groaned again with such an awful tone that it chilled the very marrow of the poor drum-major's bones.

"What do you know of ar-bi-tra-tions?"

"N-nothing!" gasped Gaifar, now trembling.

"Oo-oo-oo-ooh!" said the Grand Vizir. "Poor, poor fellow! I am sorry for you! What is the first figure of a syl-lo-gism? What is a major pre-mise? Gaifar! Gaifar! Art thou well-skilled in the subtle arts of fapesmo, fesapo, fapemo and felapton?"

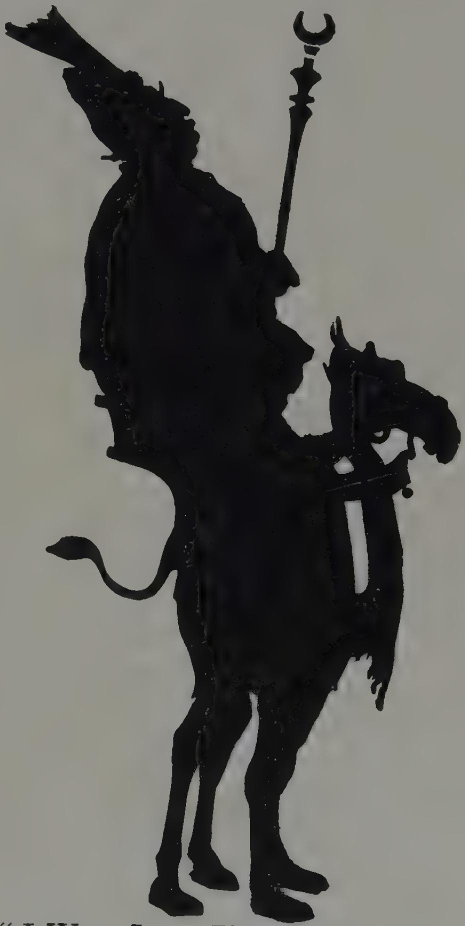
"Good gracious, no!" whispered poor Gaifar, shrunken to a wisp.

"Oo-oo-oo-oo-ooh!" groaned the Grand Vizir, until Gaifar fairly rustled in his stiff leather shoes. "You will never, never be able to keep us all from falling off the under side of the earth into nowhere and being converted into minute fragments of nothing whatever, the instant we go over the edge!"

"What can I do?" moaned poor Gaifar, piteously.

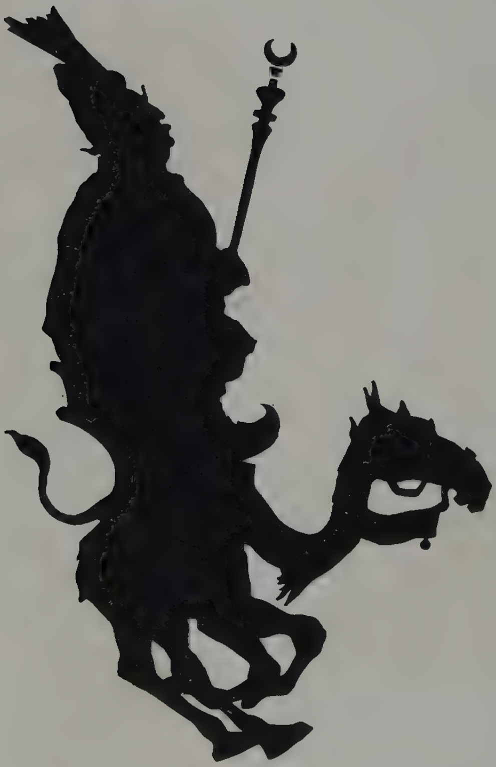
"Give me your baton, and go climb up into the band-wagon and help beat the bass-drum. I will lead this procession myself."

With a sigh of relief Gaifar slunk out of sight. The Vizir waved the baton aloft with a crafty look in his eye. Once more the royal band struck up:



"I WILL LEAD THIS PROCESSION MYSELF."

Hooray! Hooray! Te-rump-te-doodle-dee!
Hooray! Hooray! Somebody's off the key! . . .
But it matters very little where anyone may be
While we go marching through Persia!



The Crafty Vizir Leads the Way.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, went the horses' hoofs. Puff, puff, puff, strode the cushioned camels through the sand. But the Caliph slept like a top through it all. He was not going to let a little thing like riding around the world interfere with his regular sleep. Not he! But the sly Vizir, ever wildly waving his baton, crying, "Onward, en avant, vorwärts!" and inciting haste, until everyone behind him in the procession was utterly blinded by the choking dust, swept out of the beaten track in a great curve, and led the grand march round and round, so gradually, so very gradually, that no one noticed it — round and round, until, after describing an immense semicircle through the plain, the caravan again faced the North Star, and, from the other side of Chunder-abad-dad, was actually marching straight back into town.

At this juncture the first-cornet player of the band stubbed his toe. In his perturbation he blew a blast so loud, so shrill, and so discordant that it pierced the ears of the Caliph. Waking with a start, he looked about him, dazed. Then, perceiving the minarets of the city, he called furiously for the Grand Vizir, who answered at a gallop.

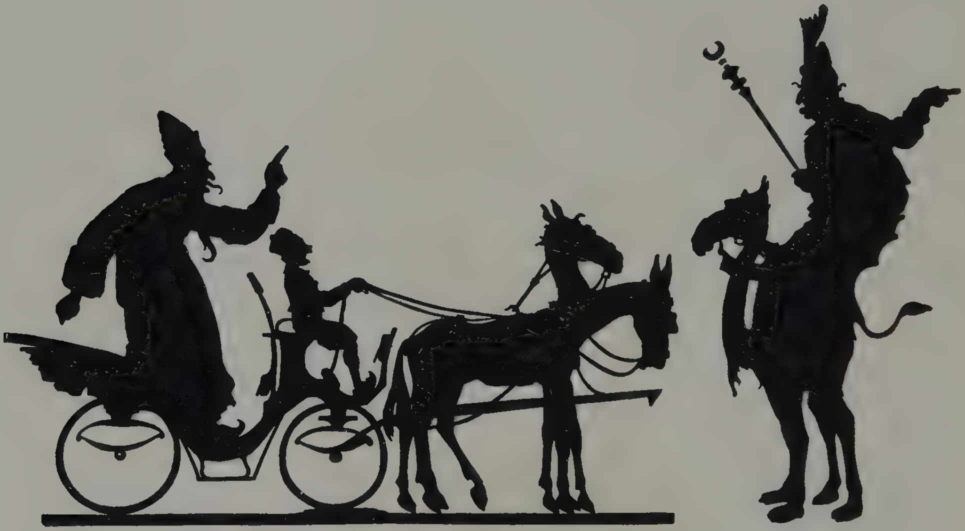
"Thou dog of a Vizir, why hast thou dared to disobey my command?" thundered the Caliph.

"Disobey thy command, sire? What dost thou mean?" exclaimed the Vizir, with well-simulated amazement.

The Minarets of the City.

"What do I mean? What do I mean?" roared the Caliph. "Why are we marching toward Chunder-abad-dad, you villain?"

"Chunder-abad-dad?" said the Vizir, looking at the Caliph, as if in surprise at the question. "Why, your royal highness, we sighted Chunder-abad-dad a good three hours ago. We must be pretty nearly around the world!"



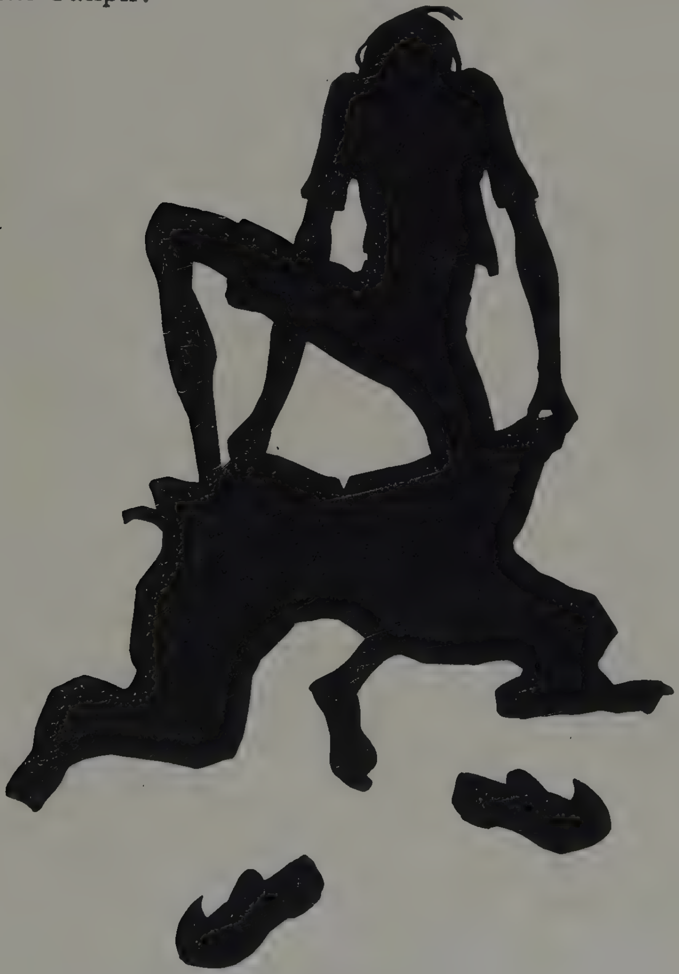
"Why Hast Thou Dared to Disobey My Command?" Thundered the Caliph.

"Goodness gracious me!" cried the Caliph, in a fever of excitement. "You don't say so? Why didn't you wake me up when we were on the under side? I might have fallen, and disarranged some of the important stars. Why, Selim," he exclaimed enthusiastically, looking at his watch, "we shall be back in time for breakfast!"

"Indeed?" said the Vizir, with a smile which meant as much as four ordinary smiles. "Why, that is so! Even now methinks I hear the great bell ringing four o'clock in the morning."

As he spoke the faraway boom of the bell tolled sonorously over the plain, and the roosters began to crow in the barnyards along the way.

Just as day dawned in the East the head of the procession entered the high gate of the city of Chunder-abad-dad in triumph, the Caliph and the Grand Vizir riding in state behind snow-white palfreys; while far in advance ran heralds shouting in stentorian voices: "Make way for the Caliph! For the world is round, and he has ridden around it! Way for the Caliph!"



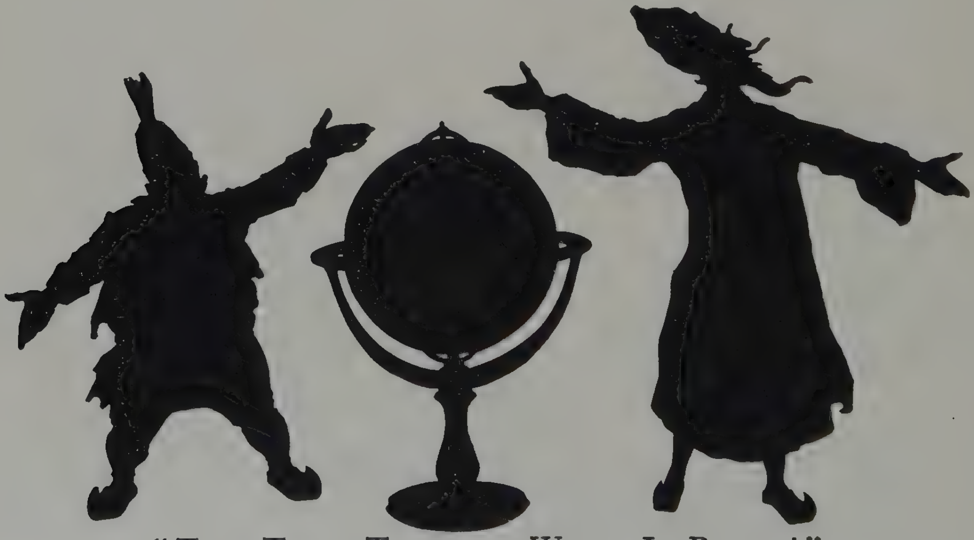
The Townspeople Plunging Into Their Trousers.

The townspeople, wakened from their quiet slumber by the sound of the shouting, plunged into their trousers in fright, threw up their windows, hurled back the shutters, and asked where the fire was; until, learning the cause of the uproar, all the city joined in a mighty shout of acclaim: "Hail to the Caliph! Hail, all hail! For the world is round, and he has ridden around it!"

Instantly, upon reaching the palace, the Caliph in exultation called for his swiftest messengers, and despatched them to the geography publishers with the amazing tidings. "Tell them," said he, "that the world is round, and ridgy like a muskmelon; and that Persia runs completely around it in one direction, and pretty nearly around it in the other!"

"Now," sighed the Caliph, with a satisfied smile, "we will have our breakfast."

"And, your royal highness," murmured the Vizir, "perhaps it might not be a bad idea, as a celebration of your achievement, to let the Seven Sages out of the pantry, so that they may hear that the world is round."

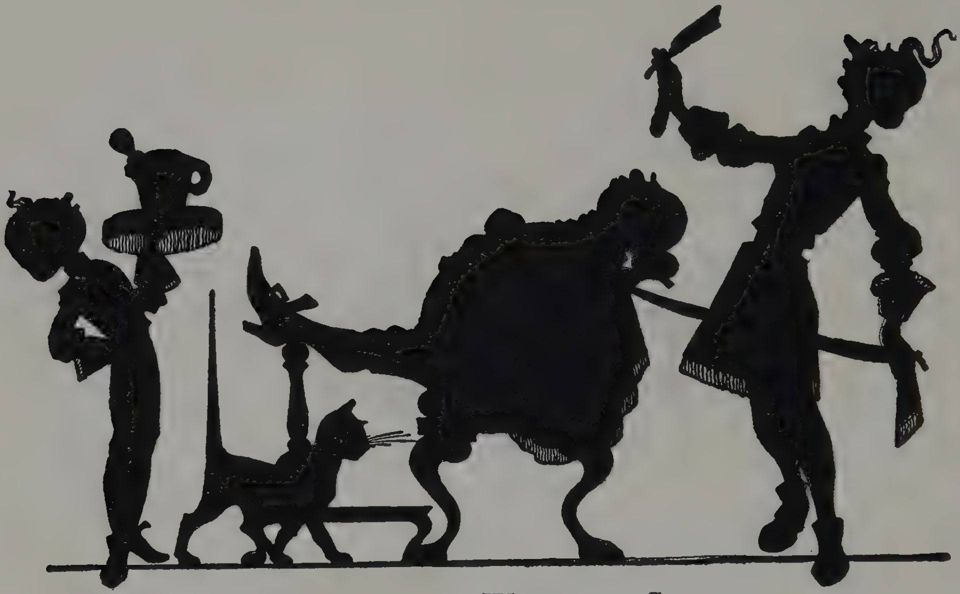


"Tell Them That the World Is Round!"

The Barber O Sari·Ann

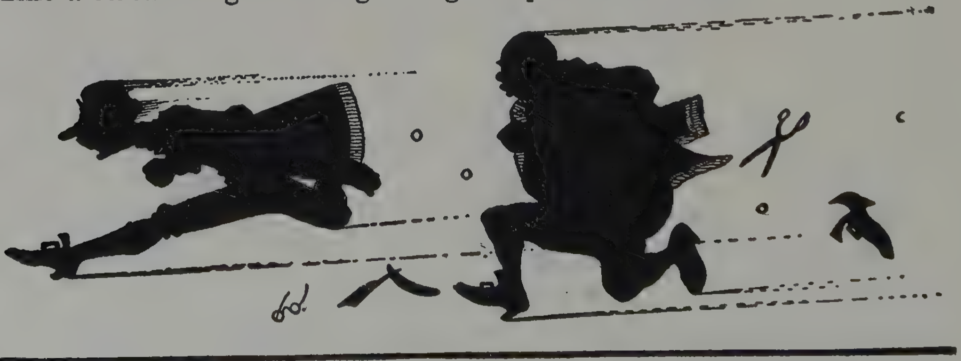
IT WAS ages ago, at the Sari-Ann fair
The King called the Court Barber to shave his face bare,
But to make the least scratch on his skin — if he dare!
Then the Barber's assistant made haste to prepare
Lather, sponges, and towels, as usual there,
Strapped the strip of a razor-strop tied to the chair,
Brought the eau-de-cologne to put on the King's hair,
And the barber began with the shaving;

When a band marching by in a rollicking way
Played a bit of a jig such as circus bands play;
And the King, who was feeling quite merry that day,
Beat the time with a nod of his head as he lay,
Loudly whistling the tune, ere the Barber could say
That to whistle while under a razor won't pay:
(When a King says to shave, why, a man *must* obey;
So the Barber went right along shaving).



THE BARBER BEGAN WITH THE SHAVING.

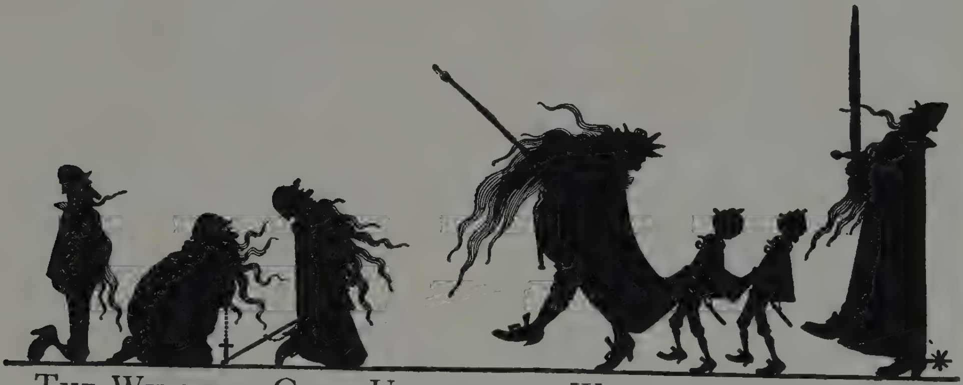
Up and down, all around, the alert razor sped,
Till, in one most unfortunate moment of dread,
The King's nose, with a bridge like the roof of a shed,
Struck the razor, which, coasting along like a sled,
Slipped, and chipped from its tip one diminutive shred!
Like a streak of greased lightning the poor Barber fled,



THE POOR BARBER FLED WHILE THE KING PURSUED.

While the King pursued, foaming with rage, as he said,
"There shall never be any more shaving!

"Ne'er again shall a whisker be cut in this land;
Or a razor so much as be held in the hand;
Or an edged tool to be used to cut beards! — Understand?
Shears and all are included in this stern command!
All offenders shall be buried, living, in sand,
Parboiled, cut in sausage-meat, pickled and canned,
And sealed with the government pork-packer's brand!"
So the Barbers all gave up their shaving.



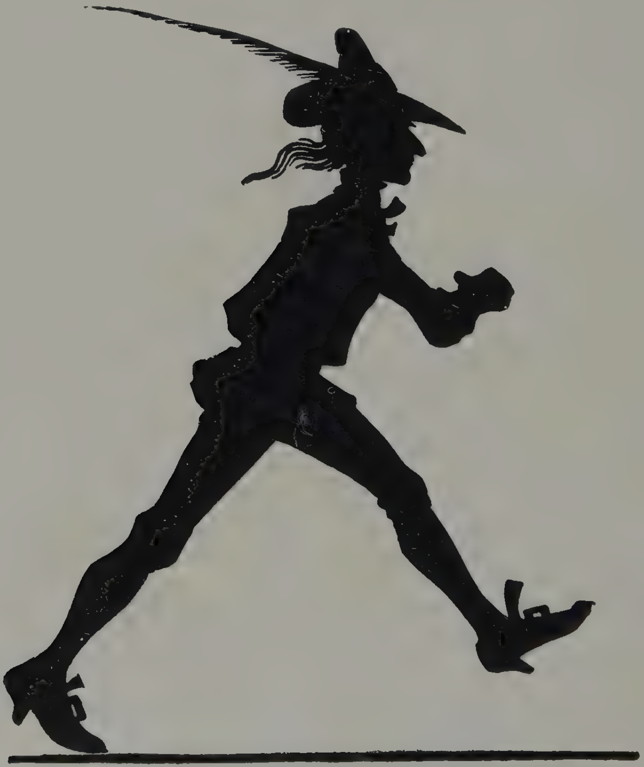
THE WHISKERS GREW UP, AND THE WHISKERS GREW DOWN.

Then the whiskers grew up, and the whiskers grew down,
And the whiskers grew gray, and the whiskers grew brown —
Mustapha! There soon were more whiskers than town!
And so long grew the King's that they covered his gown.
Then the monarch announced, with a terrible frown:
"For a shave without cutting I'll give half my crown!
Get to work, now, ye wits, and ye men of renown,
To devise some new method of shaving."

But the years rolled along, and no way could be found,
From the clouds up above, or from under the ground,

To remove the array. So did whiskers abound.
Their prodigious great lengths did all tourists astound,
Though they plaited them, matted them, wrapped them around
From their heads to their toes, coil on coil, pound on pound:
"Who removes them wins fame to forever resound,
And he'll get half the kingdom for shaving."

One fine day, down the road that approached Sari-Ann,
Strode a Stranger, abstractedly framing a plan
To take off those beards without breaking the ban.
Now, this Stranger had traveled in far Hindustan,

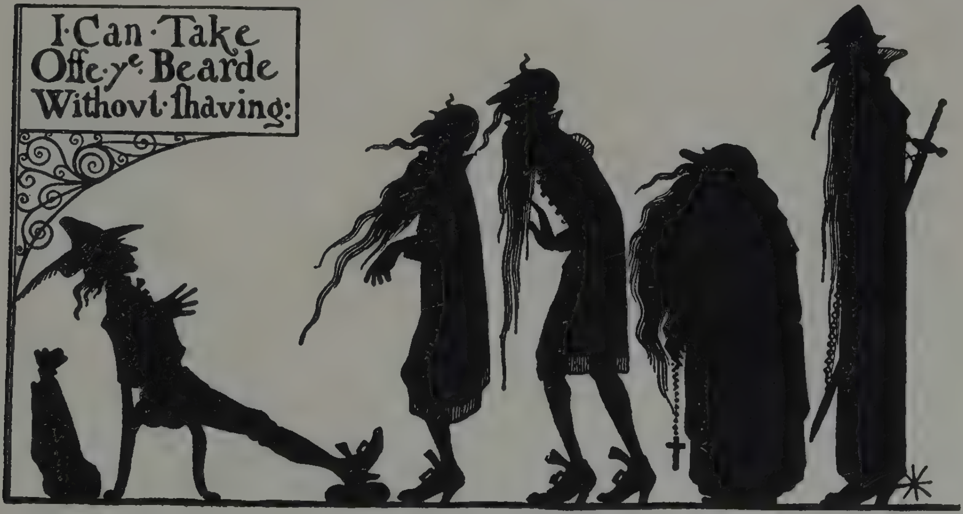


ONE FINE DAY, DOWN THE ROAD STRODE A STRANGER.

Timbuctoo, Totolapa, Toorookhansk, and Toorfan,
Pole to pole, zone to zone, from Beersheba to Dan;
And he felt that he was the identical man
Who could amputate beards without shaving.

In the square by the palace he set up his shop;
Not a cup, or a lather-brush, razor, or strop,
Nor of bay-rum, pomatum, or hair-oil one drop.
In fact, nothing at all — just a big sign on top
That made every one stare, that made every one stop,
That made every one glare, with both eyes on the pop:
"King, courtier and cavalier, warrior and fop,
I CAN TAKE OFF THE BEARD WITHOUT SHAVING!"

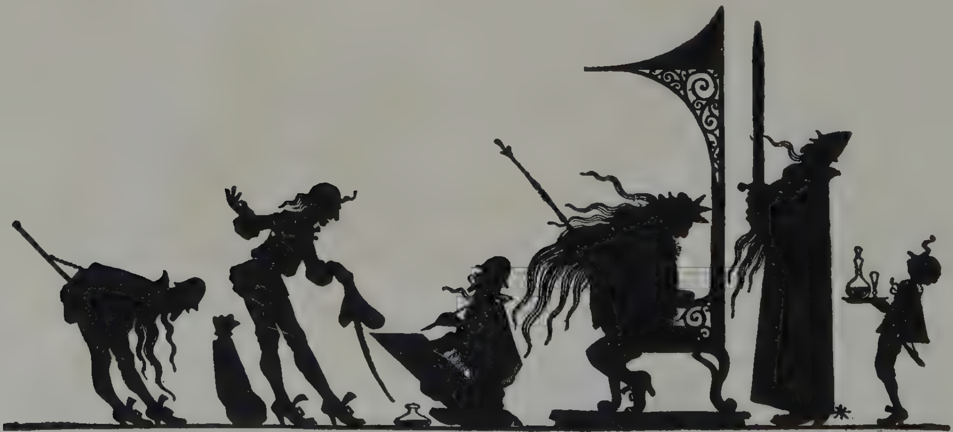
Each observer flew home all his neighbors to bring,
Just to look at this very improbable thing,
And the rumor ran round like a bull in a ring
Till it came to the palace. Then up rose the King:
"Bring him here. If he fail in this task, he shall swing
By the nape of his neck from the end of a string!



If he win, all my wealth at his feet I will fling,
    This madman who shaves without shaving."

Then the King and the court and court-counselors three,
Men-at-arms, knights and squires, a brave sight to see,
And the populace crowding the grand gallery,
All assembled to witness what necromancy
This weird Stranger might use that all whiskers should flee;
What strange magic arts, what fell mystery,
What grim abracadabra this system might be
    To get rid of beards without shaving!

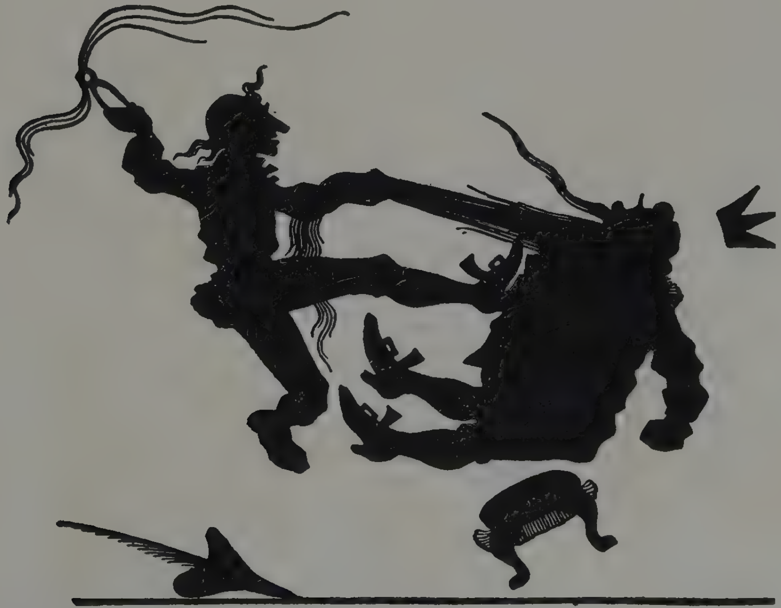
" Now promise, O Sire, since my life is at stake,
That all methods, not cutting, I've freedom to take;
That you will not once ask me my task to forsake,
Else you give me your kingdom, land, river, and lake."
The King promised a promise he never could break.
When a huge pair of pincers that made his knees quake
Were produced by the barber with threatening shake —
    "Now," said he, "we'll go on with the shaving!"



"Now Promise, O Sire, Since My Life Is at Stake."

Then he smiled a grim smile and secured a firm grip
With his pincers upon the King's beard, gave a flip,
And pulled ten long hairs with a snap like a whip!
With a hop and a howl the King clutched at his lip,
Crying, "Crickets! If this is the way that you strip
A beard off without using the scissors to snip,
Or a razor to shave, or an edged tool to clip,
I have got all I want of your shaving!

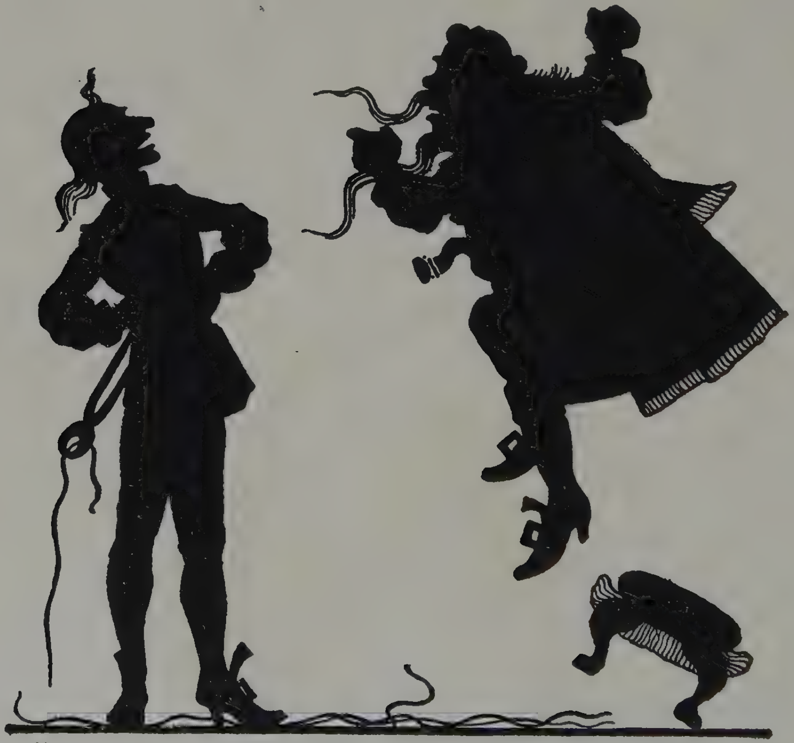
"Why, just see, you have pulled only ten bristles out,
And there must be, besides those, ten thousand as stout;
And before you could pull every separate sprout,
I would be everlastingly — gone up the spout!
It may amuse you and the crowd, I've no doubt;
But it's murder for me! Take the crown — take the gout!



He Pulled Ten Long Hairs With a Snap Like a Whip.

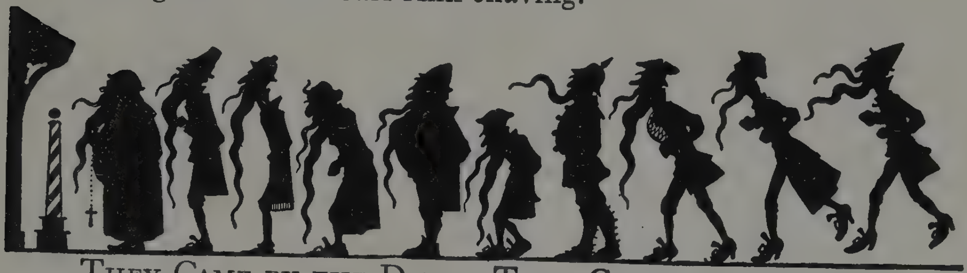
Take the land with its gold; take the sea with its trout;
Take it all — but excuse me from shaving!"

"Nay, I want not your crown: work is plenty for me;
High living with hair-cutting does not agree.
Reconsider your edict, and leave each man free
To be shaved or unshaven as pleasanter be;
For a King's stanchest prop is his leniency.
And, though men, now and then, scratch their noses, maybe
A King's eyes should be wide enough open to see
There are many worse evils than shaving."



"I Have Got All I Want of Your Shaving!"

Then the King arose meekly, and said that he guessed
He had paid pretty dear for his share of the jest;
That his edict was wrong, he then freely confessed:
All persons might shave. As for him, he'd be blessed
If he didn't give shaving and shavers a rest!
But would still act as King — if the Barber thought best
And would be his Chief Chancellor, with a bequest
    Giving him all the Sari-Ann shaving.



THEY CAME BY THE DOZEN, THEY CAME BY THE SCORE.

Then there came by the dozen, there came by the score,
Ninety thousand, nine hundred and seventy-four.
(So the censuses said; but it surely was more),
Wanting shaves who had never been shaven before,

HIS WEALTH OUTWEIGHED A FAT ELEPHANT.

All awaiting their turns at the Barber's front door;
While the round dollars rolled in a ceaseless downpour,
Till the boxes and bags of gold covered the floor,
And the Barber grew weary with shaving.

And the sum of his wealth when the business was done
Outweighed a fat elephant more than a ton.
Then he bought out the King and the kingdom, for fun,
Made the monarch his agent, the business to run,
And he said, " Of all proverbs the best is this one:
' A wise Barber sticks to his shaving.' "

Fritz the Master-Fiddler

A LONG time ago, in fact several years before there was any such thing as time, there lived a sturdy miller and his wife in a cottage at the edge of a great black forest near the village of Weisnichtwo, in the southeast corner of the kingdom of Niemandweis, just this side of the other end of nowhere.

This worthy couple had one son, Fritz, a funny little tow-headed fellow with big blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and baggy little trousers that he could almost turn around in. He was a queer little chap, too; for when the other boys played along the dusty highway and narrow street with whoop and halloo, Fritz crept quietly away to the field or forest. There, among the kaiserblumen or the fern, he would sit alone for hours, singing baby-songs to the brook as it babbled out of the woods, and making quaint little tunes for the lambs to play to — tunes that sounded like the wind in the pines, the birds calling in the tree-tops, or the stream rippling down the rocks to the water-wheel at the mill.

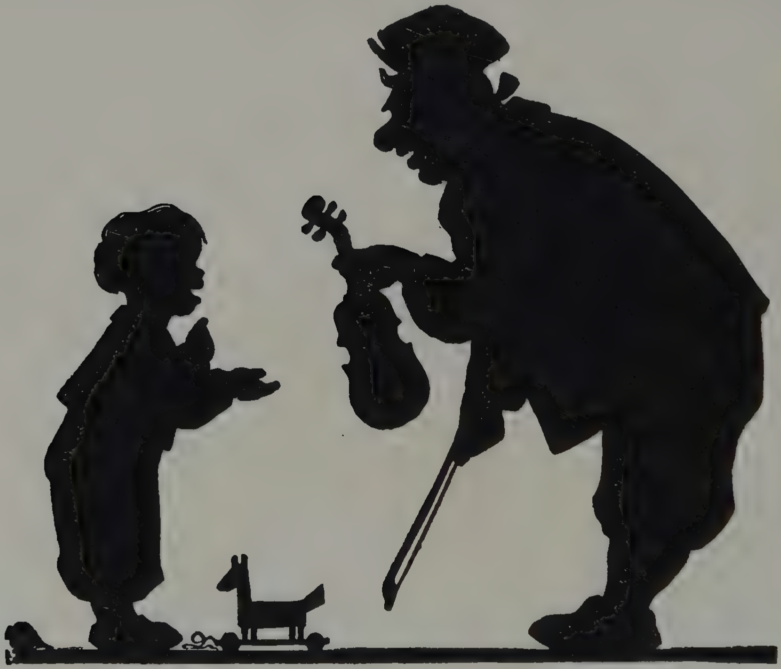
"Father," said he one day, "when I grow up I will be a master-fiddler and make music on the fiddle."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said his father; but he bought him a little yellow fiddle at the next kermess, and let him play it all day long.

It was surprising how soon Fritz could draw melody out of that

Swiss-pine box with his stubby bow! He made it fairly laugh and cry and sing and gurgle and whistle and hum, until the birds flew down from the tree-tops and hopped about him and the lambs came and lay down at his feet; and mother-sheep rubbed their noses against his knees; and the marmots peeped from among the rocks; and the rabbits paused in the thick grass with listening ears; and the brown bees buzzed about his head. None of them were afraid, for Fritz seemed one of themselves.

But he grew up — as healthy boys will do, who eat good meat, and sweet brown bread, and amber honey with creamy milk as rich as nectar — and he fiddled better and better every day, until at last he said: "Father, I fiddle too well for Weisnichtwo. These dull villagers care only for the drone of the dudelsack and a bawling song with their muddy beer. I must go out into the world and seek my fortune."

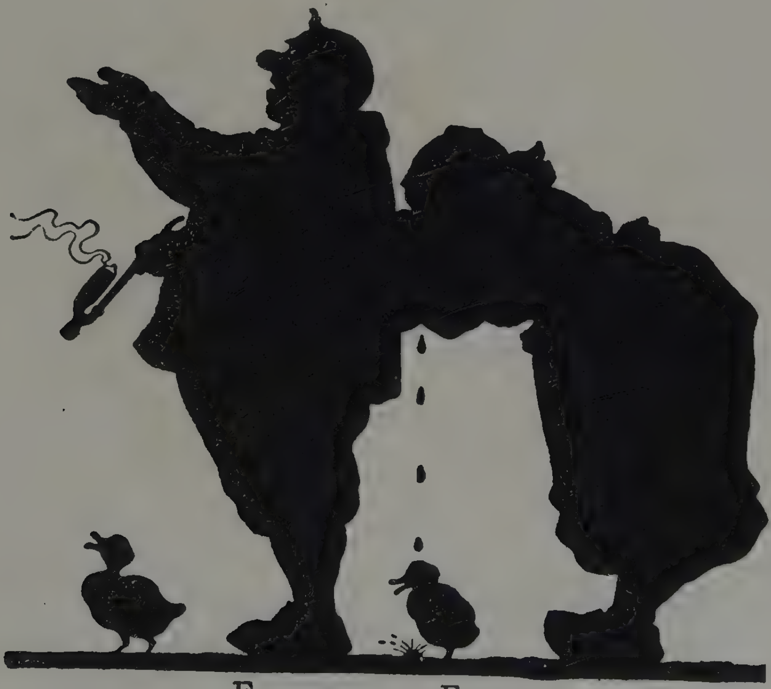


He Bought Hans a Little Yellow Fiddle.

So he took his cap and his fiddle, was blessed by his father, and kissed by his mother, waved a farewell to Weisnichtwo, and went out into the world.

At first he fiddled merrily as he went along, and thought to fiddle himself into a fortune soon. But no one stopped to listen. No one seemed to care whether he fiddled or not. And, no one offering to pay for his music, he might fairly have fiddled himself into the poor-house if one angry goose-herd had not rated him soundly for scaring the geese with his "nonsensical noise." After that Fritz indignantly tucked his unappreciated fiddle under his arm and trudged on silent and discouraged.

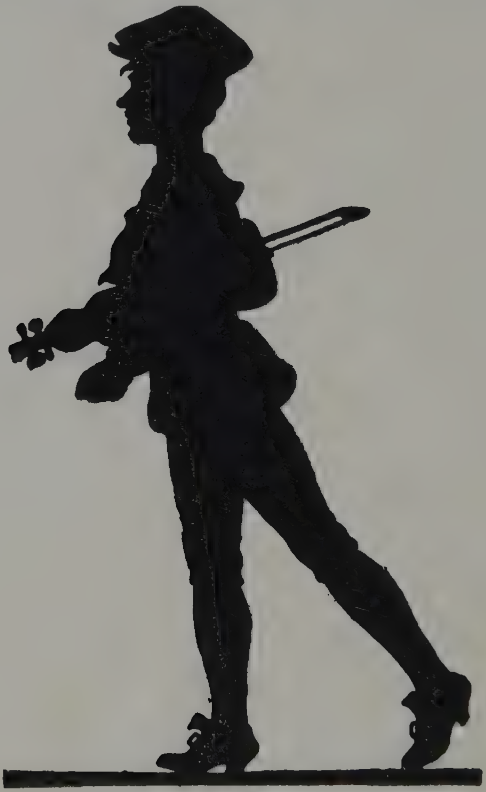
"Oh, dear!" he sighed wearily, "If they won't let me fiddle, how can I ever find my fortune? I wonder where it can be."



Farewell to Fritz.

So he began to ask the passers-by, " Good sir," or " madam," as the case might be, " have you seen my fortune? "

Some laughed at him. Some told him to mind his business. Others were too busy hunting their own fortunes to pay him any attention whatever. And at last, in one rough village, they called him a silly dunderhead, and pelted him with mud and stones until he took to his heels and ran off. All out of breath, as he turned into the cross-road he tripped over a stone and fell flat upon his fiddle with a dreadful crunch. When he picked it up out of the dust it was spoiled beyond all hope of repair, with one peg bent up, and one peg down, and one this way, and the other that, while the neck was twisted hopelessly awry.



FRITZ TRUDGED ON.

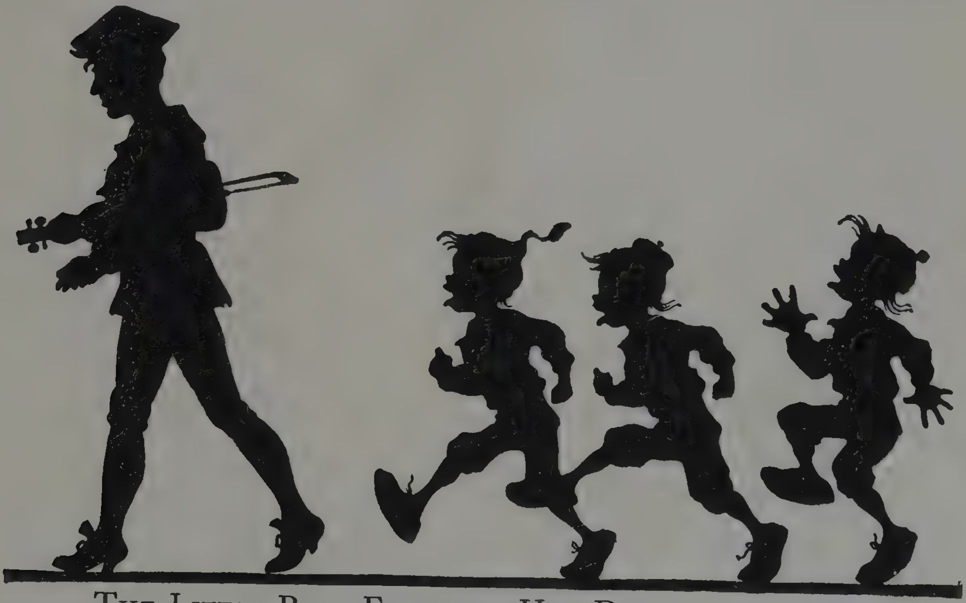
"Oh, my fiddle, my little fiddle, my dear little fiddle, it is ruined!" he sobbed; and, clasping the spoiled instrument to his breast, he limped ruefully on, hardly caring where he went or what became of him, and only knowing that his beloved fiddle would never make sweet music again.

Just at nightfall he came to the city of the king, and wandered through the gloomy streets heedless of them all.

"Hullo, Master Fiddler!" called some revelers beside a cozy inn. "Come fiddle for us, and we will pay you well!"

"I do not care to play — pay or no pay," said Fritz bitterly, as he clutched his ruined fiddle to his bosom and passed on.

"What?" cried the amazed revelers, "a fiddler who will not fiddle for pay!" And the little boys took up the shout, and followed him down the street, crying, "Look, here is a fiddler who will not fiddle for pay!" And all the people stopped to see; and many came out of their houses, hearing the cry; and soon the narrow way was so crowded that



The Little Boys Followed Him Down the Street.

the king's carriage could not pass, and a footman came to learn the cause of the blockade.

"It is a fiddler who will not fiddle for pay!" yelled the gamins in the gutter.

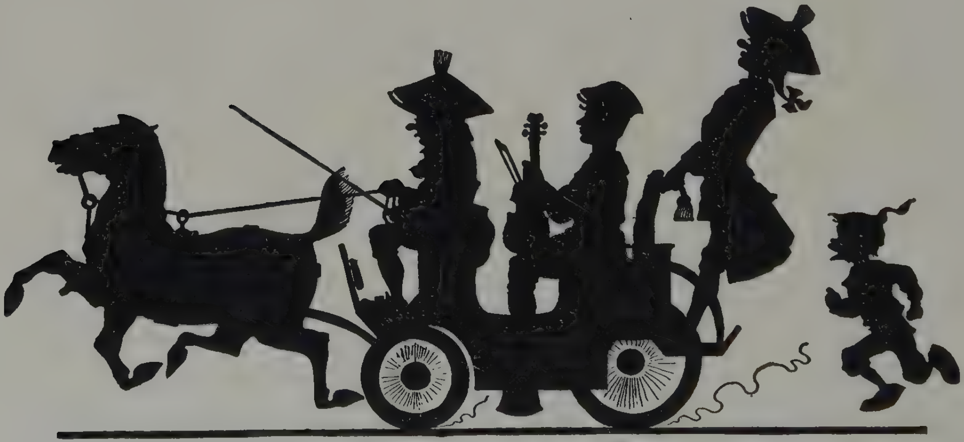
"Indeed?" exclaimed the king. "Then he must surely be a great fiddler! Tell him he may come to my palace and play."

But Fritz thought only of his poor, twisted fiddle, and replied, "I do not care to play, king or no king!"

"Dear me!" cried his Majesty, surprised. "This must be a very fine fiddler, indeed, who does not fairly jump at the chance to play before a king. I surely must hear him!"

So he sent his coach and a regiment of grenadiers to bring Fritz to the palace, or to take him to prison if he would not play — for he gave him his choice, being a magnanimous king.

Then Fritz was at his wit's end. His clothes were torn, his fiddle was spoiled — but there was no way to escape; so in sheer despair he faced the music like a man. "If the king *will* hear me play, he shall!" said he grimly, as he climbed into the coach and was whirled to the palace.



He Climbed Into the Coach and Was Whirled to the Palace.

"So," said the king, "you are here, are you?"

"Yes," replied Fritz, as he looked about, "I believe I am."

"Then call the court," cried the king; "we will have some first-class A No. 1 music! But where are your notes?"

"This fiddle does not play by note," faltered Fritz; which was very true — it certainly did not!

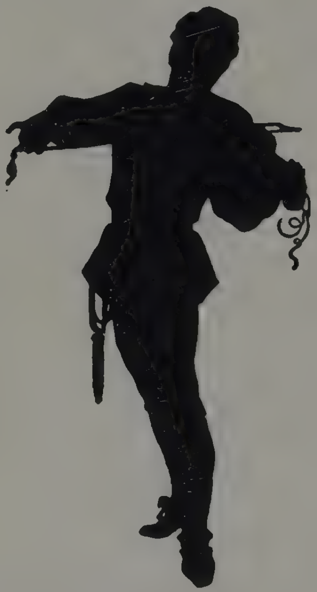
"Ah," whispered the king to the vice-chancellor, "what did I tell you? This fellow is a genius — he does not fiddle by note."

"Yes," whispered the vice-chancellor, "he must indeed be a genius — just see how very shabby he is!"

But, "Oh, dear!" groaned Fritz to himself, "it is all up with me!" And then, with his heart clear up in his throat, though outwardly smiling, he hastily filled his ears with cotton and began to play.

Such a shrieking, such a squeaking, such a wild, ear-piercing scream as came out of that crooked fiddle! Ugh-h-h-h!

Why, even the sparrows under the palace eaves jumped out of their nests, flew over the fence, and never came back again. The king's pet cat crawled under the cellar door and yowled with fear; while, for a moment, paralyzed with amazement, the courtiers sat motionless and dumb!



Fritz Began to Play.

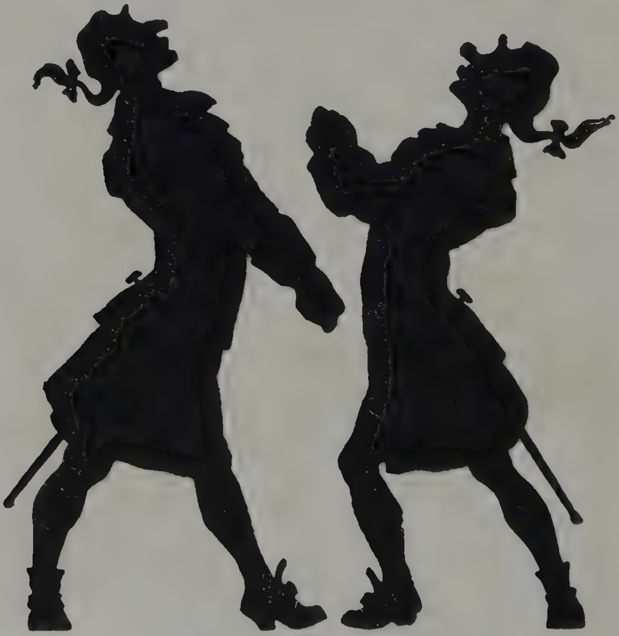
They had never heard any such music as that before. It set their teeth on edge, made their flesh creep, and raised goose-flesh on the very marrow of their shivering bones! But there stood Fritz, placidly playing away as if he were producing the sweetest sounds in the world. And had not the king himself said that this fiddler was a genius? Certainly he had! And since the king had said it, it must be so. Consequently, every man Jack of them was afraid to say he did not like it.

And no one dared to admit that he saw nothing lovely in it, for fear he should appear more stupid than his neighbor.

So they all clasped their hands, and, turning to each other, cried in one ecstatic voice, "Oh, this must be a *new* school of music — it *must be* a new school! Isn't it overpowering — isn't it forceful — isn't it thrilling — isn't it just too utterly ne-plus-ultra for anything!" "Ah," said one, "it isn't everybody who can have taste for such music!" "No, indeed," answered another; "one should know how to listen!"

And then they all listened with rapt attention and clasped hands, while they fairly squirmed, and longed for the roof to fly off, the walls to fall in, the floor to blow up, or something — or anything, oh, anything! — just to stop that horrible noise!

Now it happened that, seven years before, the Crown Princess Hilda's favorite wax doll had fallen head first into the royal soup-

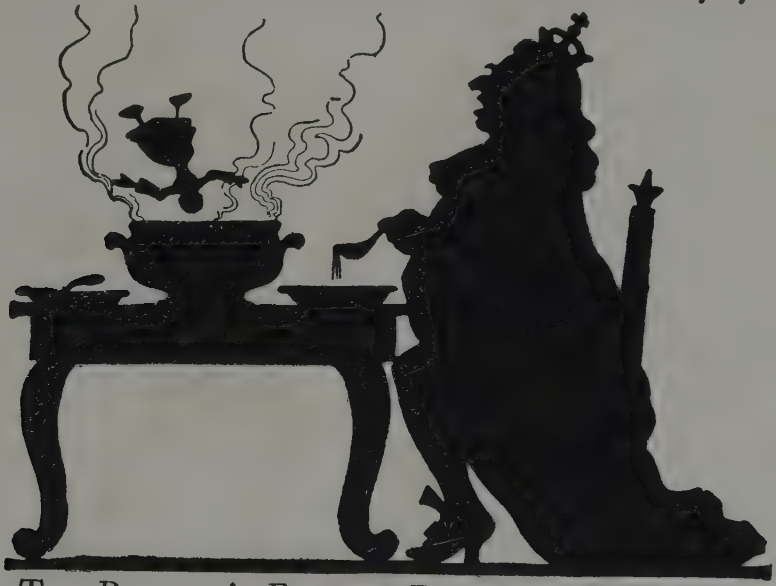


"Isn't It Thrilling?"

tureen one day at dinner; and the soup, being hot, had melted off her nose. Whereat, after one wild burst of childish grief, the princess had been seized with profound sorrow, and had gone into deep mourning for her disfigured darling, refusing to be comforted, and had never smiled again. The court physician had given her potions and powders until she was pale as a ghost. She had traveled to all of the fashionable watering-places for change of air until she was worn to a shadow. Fabulous rewards had been offered for anything to break her sorrow, but in vain. Her sorrow remained unbroken.

There, attended by a favorite maiden, and with a trusty grenadier within call, upon a raised dais at the end of the great hall, a fragile little waxen princess in gloomy black, brown-haired and hazel-eyed, she sat, so deeply wrapped in melancholy that nothing seemed to move her.

But at the first shriek of Fritz's crooked fiddle she jumped with surprise and looked up with a sudden sparkle in her heavy eyes. And

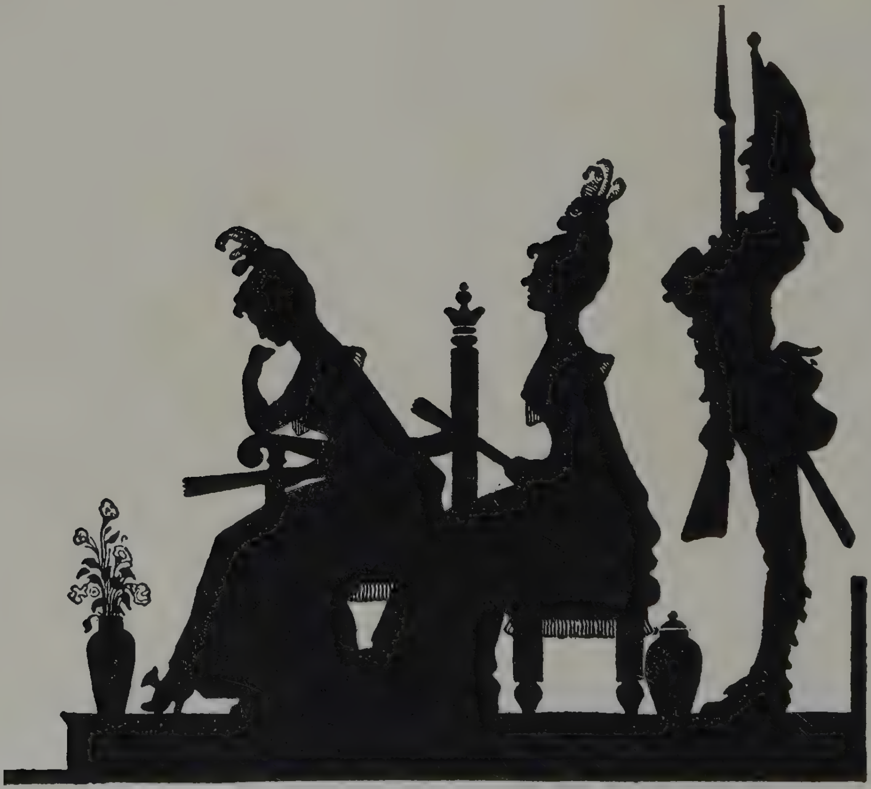


THE PRINCESS'S FAVORITE DOLL FELL HEAD FIRST INTO THE SOUP.

as she listened to the squeaking, screaming, shrieking squeal, a gleam lit up her face, she cast one quick look around the vast audience all in its rapt attention, and falling back into her chair broke into a peal of uncontrollable laughter.

"Oh, my! — oh, my! — oh, my!" she cried, holding her sides. "It sounds like — a little pig under — a — gate!" And she laughed until the tears ran down her face.

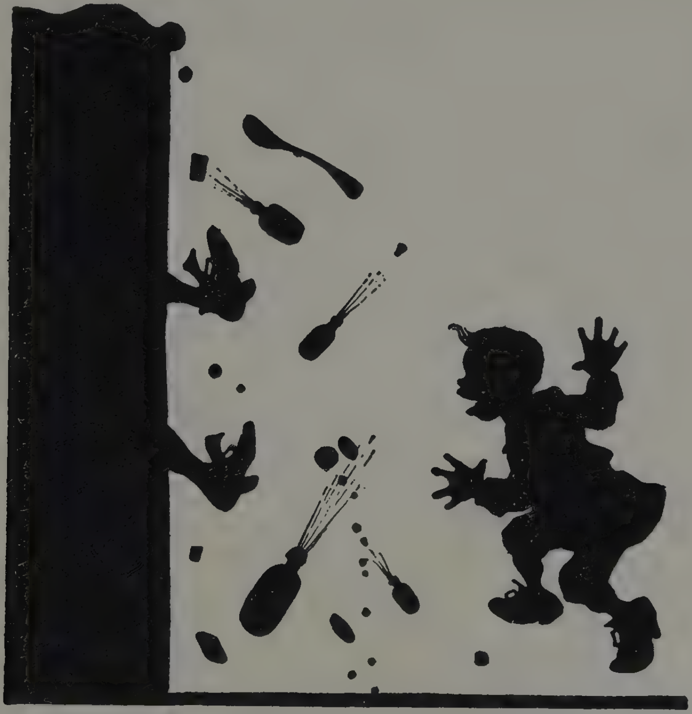
Oh, the scene of wild excitement that ensued! The king tossed his crown up to the ceiling; the lord high chamberlain fell over two small pages, trying to dance a jig; the whole court rolled off their chairs in



SHE SAT, DEEPLY WRAPPED IN MELANCHOLY.

delighted surprise; and the court physician had three conniption fits in rapid succession behind the Japanese screen — for the melancholy spell was broken, the princess was cured, and his high-salaried situation was at an end!

Then the king fell upon Fritz's neck and kissed him, to his great embarrassment; and the courtiers, delighted that the fiddling had stopped, cheered until they were hoarse, crying, "Long live Fritz, the Master-Fiddler!" And the populace outside, hearing the shout, took up the cry until they were twice as hoarse: "Long live Fritz, the Master-Fiddler!" although they had not the slightest idea what it was all about — which made no difference at all with the populace.


THE COURT PHYSICIAN HAD CONNIPTION FITS.

"And now, Sir Master-Fiddler," exclaimed the king, when the hullabaloo had stopped; "since you have cured the princess, of course you will marry her."

"Shall I?" stammered Fritz, blushing like a girl. "Why?"

"Because that is the way I am going to have this story end," said the king, firmly. "And I am not going to have it spoiled by any nonsense!"

"Well," said Fritz, thoughtfully, rubbing his chin; "if I must, I suppose I must — but," he continued uneasily, "I would like to ask the princess one thing before the wedding takes place."

"What is that?" asked the princess, smiling up into his face.

"Will — will — will," he stammered bashfully — "will you marry me?"

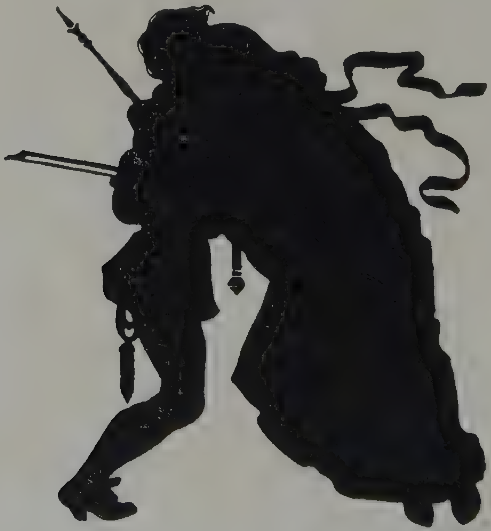
"Yes," replied she, shyly dropping her dark eyelashes, and laying her little hand confidingly upon his broad shoulder; "but —"

"But what?" cried Fritz anxiously.

"You must never —"

"What?" gasped Fritz, turning pale with apprehension.

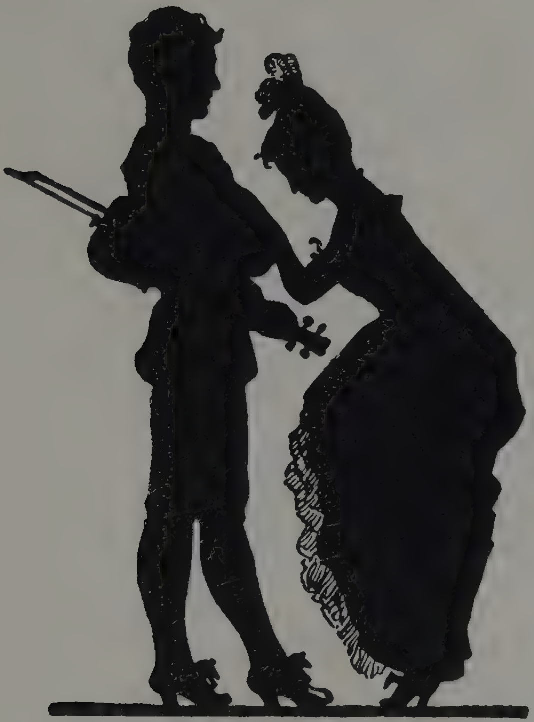
"Play that horrible fiddle round the house!"

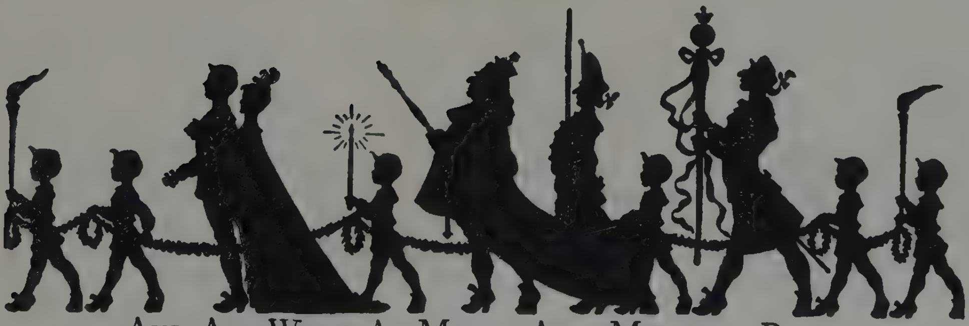


THE KING FELL ON FRITZ'S NECK.

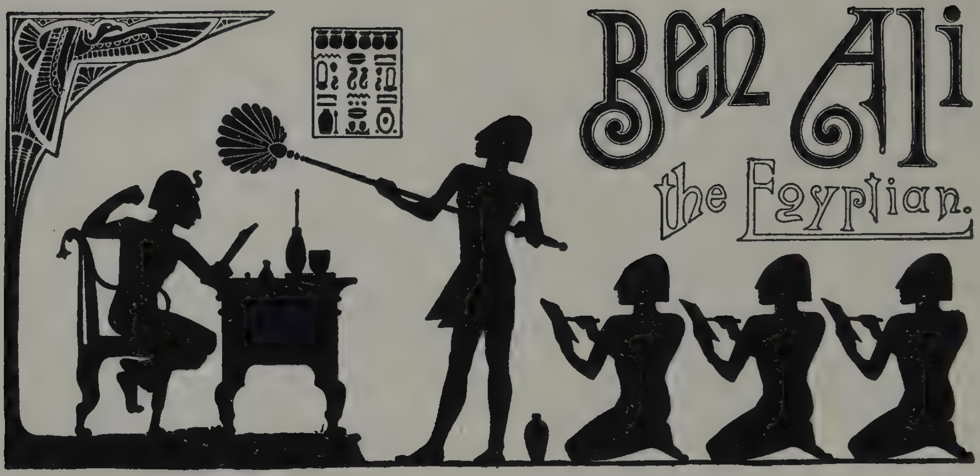
"Oh!" ejaculated Fritz, with a smile of relief that spoke volumes, as he removed the cotton from his ears; "I promise you I never will."

And he never did.





And All Went As Merry As a Marriage Bell.



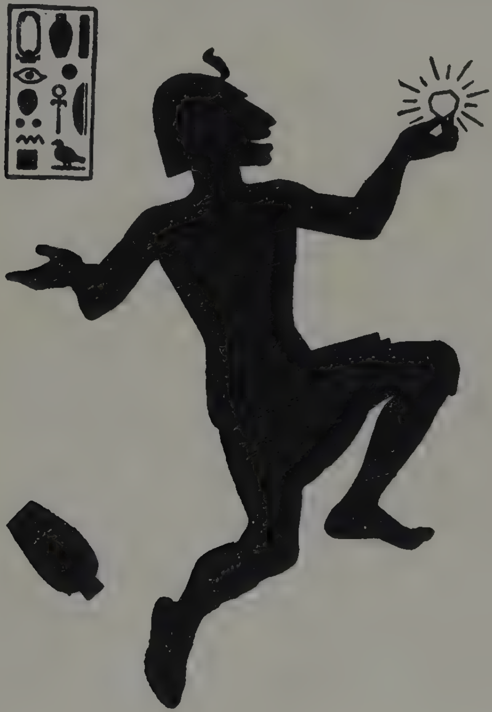
Ben Ali the Egyptian.

IN A hall of strange description, antiquarian Egyptian,
Working on his monthly balance-sheet, the troubled monarch sat,
With a frown upon his forehead, hurling interjections horrid
At the state of his finances, for his pocket-book was flat.
Not a solitary, single copper cent had he to jingle
In his pocket; while his architects had gone off on a strike,
Leaving pyramids unfinished, as their salaries diminished,
And their credit vanished likewise in a way they did not like.

It was harder for His Royal Highness than for sons of toil.
For the horny-handed workmen only ate two figs per day;
While the king liked sweet potatoes, puddings, pies, and canned tomatoes,
Boneless ham and Blue Point oysters, cooked some prehistoric way.
Men sing small on economics when it comes to empty stomachs,
And Egyptian kings are molded just the ordinary size;

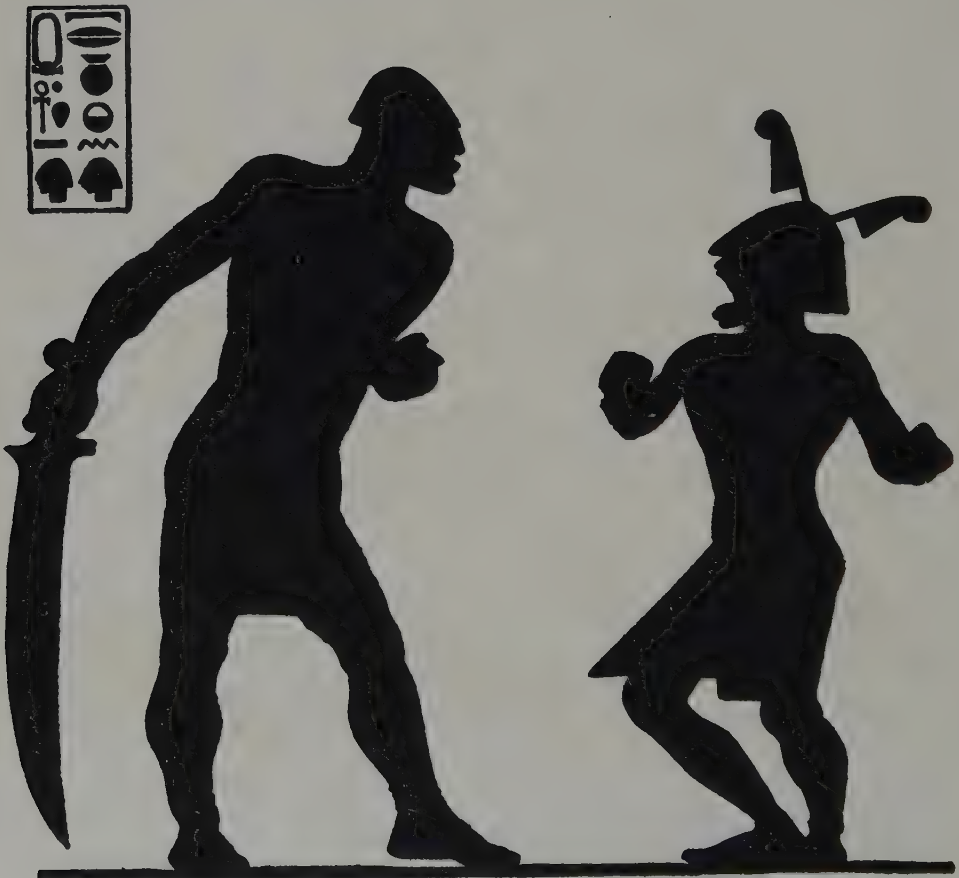
So with appetite unwonted old Rameses groaned and grunted,
As he longed for twisted doughnuts, ginger-cakes, and apple-pies.

While he growled, the royal grumbler spied a bit of broken tumbler
In a long undusted corner, just behind the palace door.
When his hungry optics spied it he stood silently and eyed it;
Then he smote his thigh in ecstasy and danced about the floor.
" By the wit Osiris gave me, this same bit of glass shall save me!
I will sell it for a diamond at some stupendous price.
And whoe'er I ask to take it will find, for his own sweet sake, it
Will be better not to wait until I have to ask him twice!"



He Danced About the Floor.

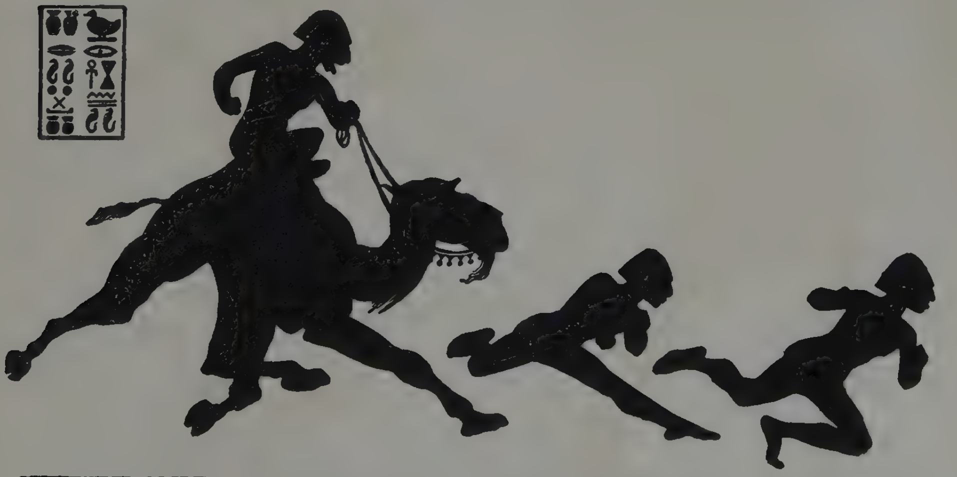
Then a royal proclamation was despatched throughout the nation,
Most imperatively calling to appear before the king,
Under penalties most cruel, every man who bought a jewel,
Or who sold or bartered precious stones, and all that sort of thing.
Thereupon the traders' nether joints quaked and knocked together;
For they thought they smelled a rodent on the sultry desert air.
It was ever their misfortune to be pillaged by extortion;
So they packed their Saratogas in lugubrious despair.



WHEREUPON THE KING'S ASSASSIN DREW HIS SWORD.

When they faced the great propylon, with an apprehensive smile on,
Sculptured there, in hieroglyphics two feet wide and three feet high,
Was the threat of King Rameses to chop every man to pieces
If, when shown the royal diamond, they dared refuse to buy.
Pale but calm, the dealer, Muley Hassan, eyed the gem and coolly
Cried, "The thing is but a common tumbler-bottom; nothing more!"
Whereupon the king's assassin drew his sword, and Muley Hassan
Never peddled rings again along the Nile's primeval shore.

Then Abd-Allah Abd-El-Mahdi faintly said the stone was shoddy,
But he thought upon a pinch he might bid fifty cents himself.
There ensued a slight commotion ere he could repent the notion;
And Abd-Allah was promoted to the Oriental shelf.
Every heart was wildly quaking; every knee was feebly shaking;
It was poverty or death before them all they plainly saw.
When the king played judge and jury, never man escaped his fury,
For his rulings were despotic and his lightest word was law.

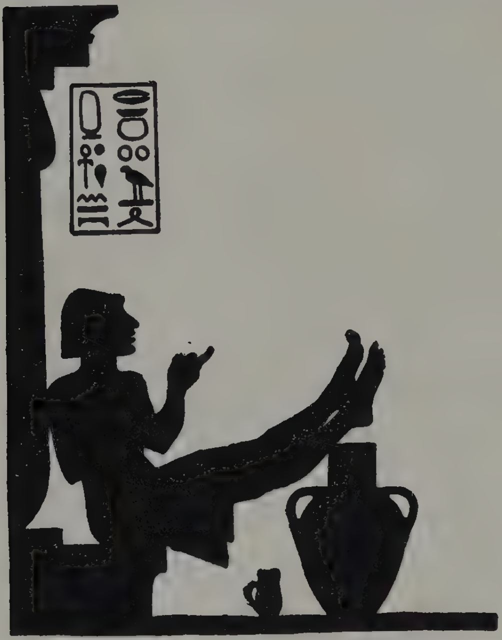


THROUGH THE VALLEYS OF THE TIGRIS, THE EUPHRATES, AND THE NILE.

When they saw how things resulted, all the jewelers consulted
On some plan to save their lives, before they dared to dine or sup —
Dashing off on flying journeys to consult the best attorneys,
Who referred to their authorities, and had to give it up!
Quite exciting was the writing, the inditing, and the skiting
Through the valleys of the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile;
But, in spite of all their seeking, not a hole appeared for sneaking
Safely out of the predicament which deepened all the while.

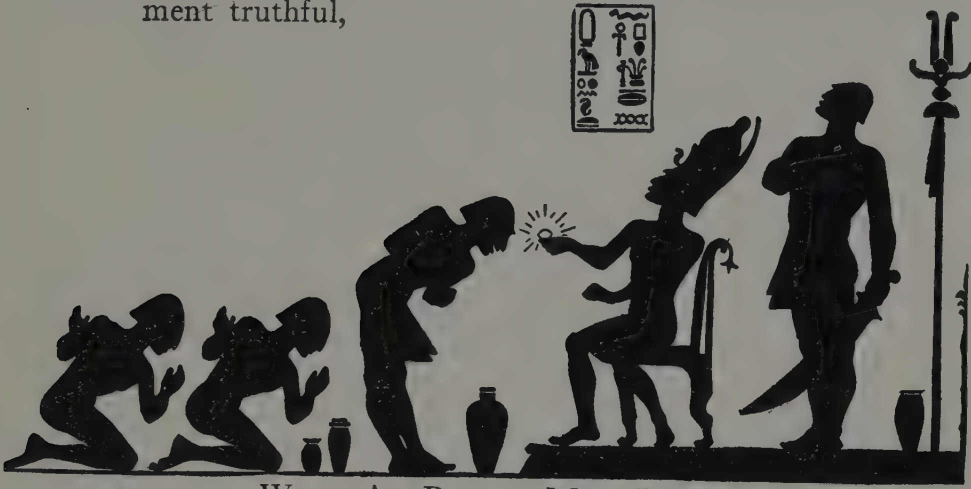
Through it all with visage jolly, by the palace gate Ben Ali
Sat, without a dollar to his name, and nothing else to do.
Though his clothes were old and holey, he was sleek and roly-poly;
So he sat and smiled in silence at the many things he knew.
Suddenly a bright idea struck him: Why could he not be a
Champion of all these jewelers, and save them from their fate?
He had not spent days compiling abstruse problems on the tiling
Of the vestibule for nothing, so he did not hesitate,

But with confidence suggested, if their cause in him were vested,
He could extricate them safely ere a dog could wag its tail;



By the Palace Gate Ben Ali Sat.

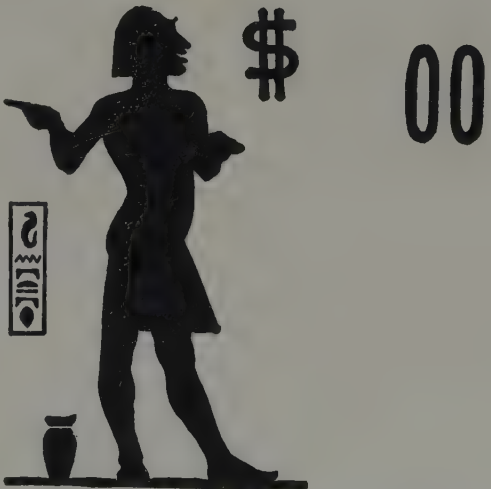
And, although he seemed quite youthful, they would find his statement truthful,



WHEN ALI ROSE TO MEET HIM.

For within his little lexicon was no such word as "fail."
How they crowded on the balustrade that ran around the palace,
When Ben Ali knelt before His Royal Majesty the King!
And when Ali rose to meet him, how the cheers burst forth to greet him —
"Sail in, Benny!" "You're the boy!" — until they made the welkin ring!

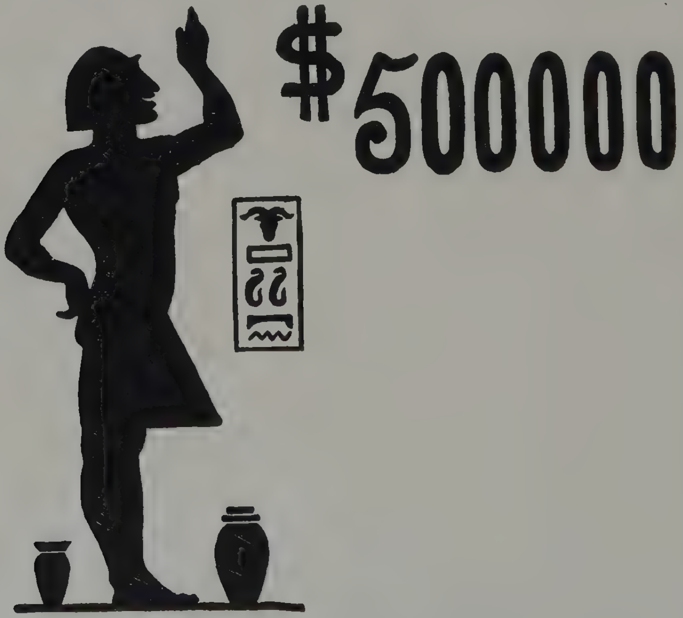
"It would be the sheerest folly, great Rameses," said Ben Ali,
"To pretend to buy the finest precious stone upon the earth



SO HE CHALKED ANOTHER CIPHER.

Without going at it coolly, and approximating duly,
Without fear and without favor, its indubitable worth.
I confess, and likewise shall you, that this stone's intrinsic value
Is but nothing — while the estimate that Muley Hassan gave
Adds another nothing to it — for it's glass, and Muley knew it!"
So he chalked another cipher with a graceful Delsarte wave.

"If I understand your theses, most adorable Rameses,
You must part with this great diamond to raise a little gold;
Yet, although you wish to sell it — you'll forgive me if I tell it —
Its true worth increases naught on that account, when all is told."
So he pointed to his writing, and went calmly on reciting;
"Nothing added to a nothing surely makes it nothing more;
And the value I have thought on simply puts another naught on
To the aggregated estimate, increasing it to four:

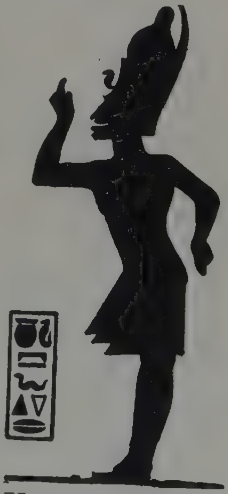


Making Full Five Hundred Thousand.

Now it seems to me to follow that the sum bid by Abd-Allah —
Which was fifty, if I recollect the circumstance aright —
Should be likewise added to it; so, just by your leave, I'll do it,
Making full five hundred thousand in a fair, unbiased light.
"Sire, I trust my computation suits your royal estimation,
As I wish to buy the gem that you are offering for sale.
I am sent with that intention by the Jewelers' Convention,
And I lose my whole commission if my proposition fail."

Gloating on the promised treasure, King Rameses beamed with pleasure,
And, arising, said he thought five hundred thousand just the dot;
Yet, although he quite believed him, still men had before deceived him,
So he felt constrained to ask entire payment on the spot.
"Very well," said Ben; "but scholars would allow at least five dollars
As a discount from the whole amount that I have been assessed."
"I agree," the king said, smiling in a manner quite beguiling,
"You may discount five for cash in hand, and then produce the rest."

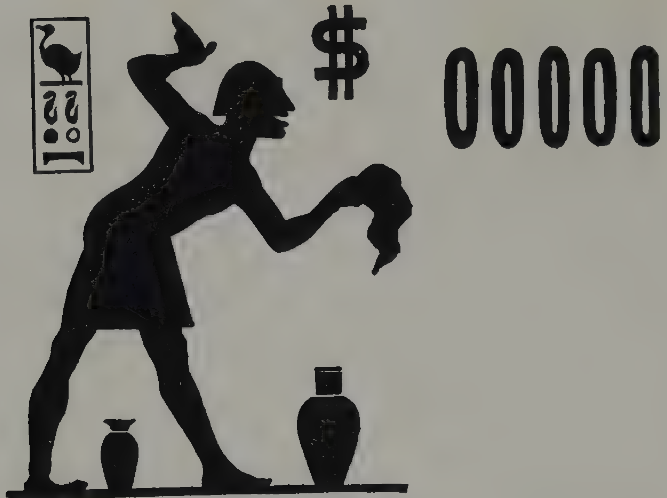
In a hurry King Rameses signed them all complete releases
And receipts in full for every responsibility;
And, as soon as that was done, he asked Ben Ali for the money;
Whereupon Ben Ali rose, and said with great civility,
"That we may not make a miscount, I will first subtract my discount."
Then he took his hemstitched handkerchief and rubbed the five away.



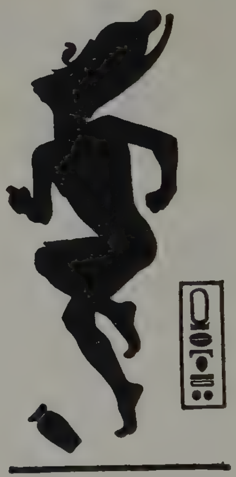
King Rameses Beamed With Pleasure.

"Now I'm ready to obey you, and am quite prepared to pay you
The remainder as it stands — for there is nothing left to pay!"

King Rameses tore his raiment at such visionary payment,
Seeing how the wool was pulled across his mercenary eyes;
But his claims were all receipted, and his wicked aims defeated;

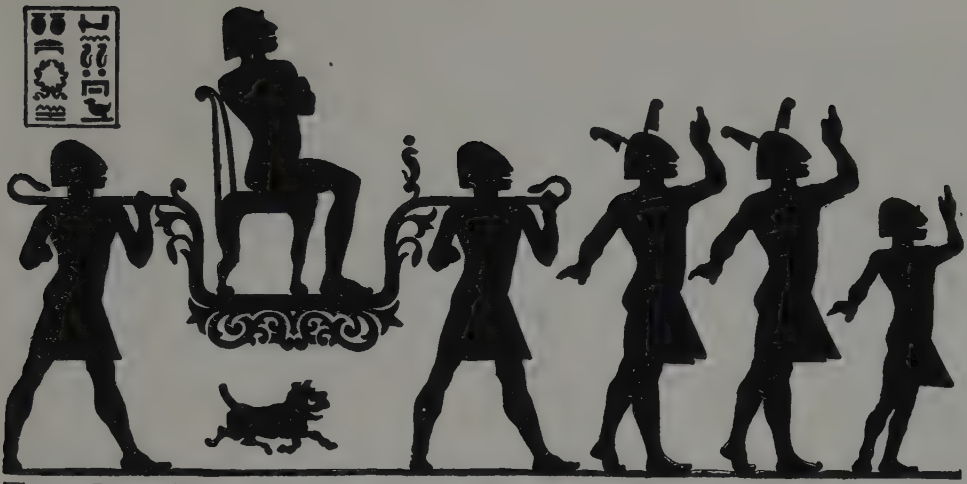


Then He Took His Hemstitched Handkerchief and Rubbed the Five Away.

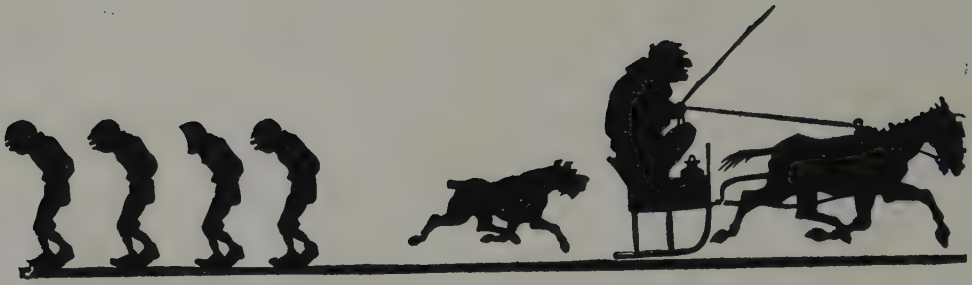


His Wicked Aims Defeated.

So he'd have to whet his appetite on atmospheric pies.
Then like some volcanic spasm burst the crowd's enthusiasm,
Making Ali rich with presents in the rapture that ensued:
While a very ancient carving represents the king as starving —
But it's likely that the neighbors sent him in some sort of food.

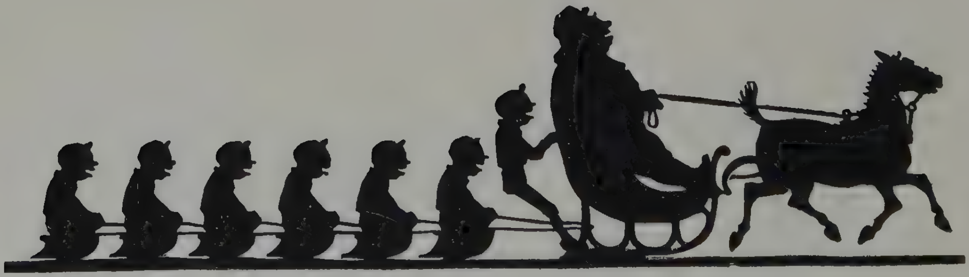


THEN LIKE SOME VOLCANIC SPASM BURST THE CROWD'S ENTHUSIASM.



GRANGER GRIND AND FARMER MELLOW

Old Granger Grind whips out behind,
  And lets nobody ride;
But Farmer Mellow is a jolly good fellow;
  Which cannot be denied!
Hang on, or hitch, he doesn't care which,
  For his sleigh is broad and wide;
And Farmer Mellow is a jolly good fellow;
  Which cannot be denied!



How Cats Came to Purr.

A BOY having a Pet Cat which he Wished to Feed, Said to Her, "Come, Cat, Drink this Dish of Cream; it will Keep your Fur as Soft as Silk, and Make you Purr like a Coffee-Mill."

He had no sooner said this than the Cat, with a Great Glare of her Green Eyes, bristled her Tail like a Gun-Swab, and went over the Back Fence, head first — pop! — as Mad as a Wet Hen.

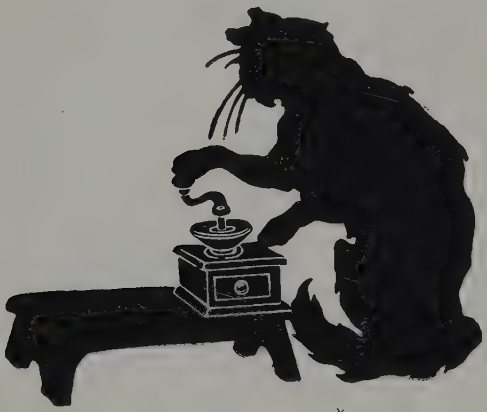
And this is how she came to do so:

The story is an old one — very, very old. It may be Persian; it may be not: that is of very little moment. It is so old that if all the nine lives of all the cats that have ever lived in the world were set up together in a line, the other end of it would just reach back to the time when this occurred.

And this is the story:

Many, many years ago, in a country which was quite as far from anywhere else as the entire distance thither and back, there was a huge cat that ground the coffee in the King's kitchen, and otherwise assisted with the meals.

This cat was, in truth, the actual and very father of all subsequent cats, and his name was Sooty Will, for his hair was as black as a night in a coal-hole. He was ninety years old, and his mustaches were like whisk-brooms. But the most singular thing about him was that in all his life he had never once purred nor humped up his back, although his master often stroked him. The fact was that he never had learned to purr, nor had any reason, so far as he knew, for humping up his back. And being the father of all the cats, there was no one to tell him how. It remained for him to acquire a reason, and from his example to devise a habit which cats have followed from that time forth, and no doubt will forever follow.



The Huge Cat That Ground the Coffee in the King's Kitchen.

The King of the country had long been at war with one of his neighbors; but one morning he sent back a messenger to say that he had beaten his foeman at last, and that he was coming home for an early breakfast as hungry as three bears. "Have batter-cake and coffee," he directed, "hot and plenty of 'em!"

At that the turnspits capered and yelped with glee, for batter-cakes and coffee are not cooked upon spits, and so they were free to sally forth into the city streets and watch the King's home-coming in a grand parade.

But the cat sat down on his tail in the corner and looked cross. "Scat!" said he, with an angry caterwaul. "It is not fair that you should go and that I should not."

"Oh, yes, it is," said the gleeful turnspits; "turn and turn about is fair play: you saw the rat that was killed in the parlor."

"Turn about fair play, indeed!" cried the cat. "Then all of you get to your spits; I am sure that is turn about!"

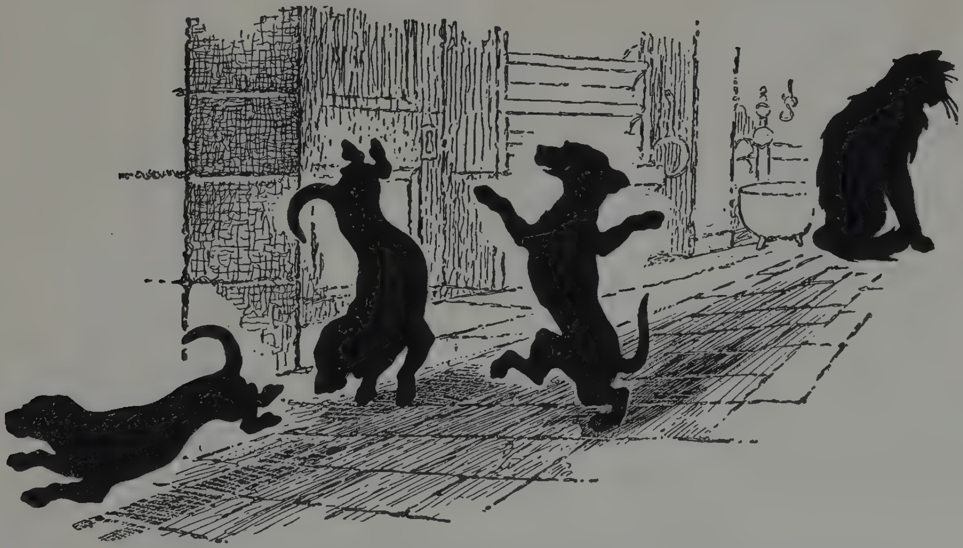
"Nay," said the turnspits, wagging their tails and laughing. "That is over and over again, which is not fair play. 'T is the coffee-mill that is turn and turn about. So turn about to your mill, Sooty Will; we are off to see the King!"

With that they pranced out into the court-yard, turning hand-springs, head-springs, and heel-springs as they went, and, after giving three hearty and vociferous cheers in a grand chorus at the bottom of the garden, went capering away for their holiday.

The cat spat at their vanishing heels, sat down on his tail in the chimney-corner, and was very glum indeed.

Just then the cook looked in from the pantry. "Hullo!" he said gruffly. "Come, hurry up the coffee!" That was the way he always gave his orders.

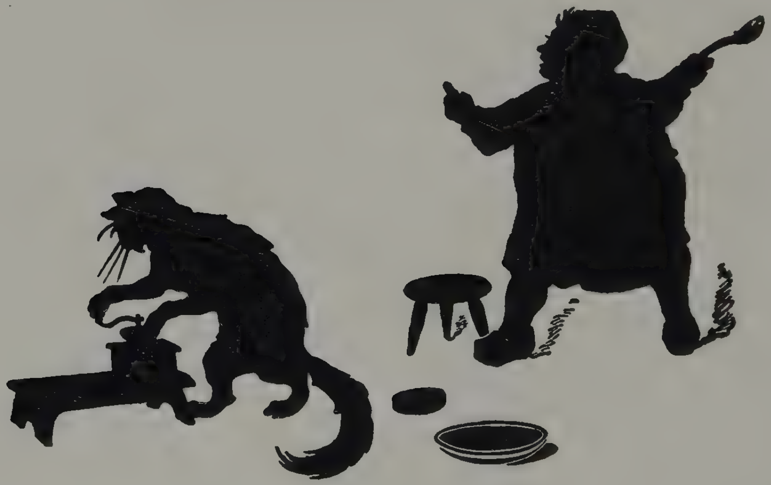
The black cat's whiskers bristled. He turned to the mill with a



Turning Hand-Springs, Head-Springs, and Heel-Springs as They Went.

fierce frown, his long tail going to and fro like that of a tiger in its lair; for Sooty Will had a temper like hot gunpowder, that was apt to go off sizz, whizz, bang! and no one to save the pieces. Yet, at least while the cook was by, he turned the mill furiously, as if with a right goodwill.

Meantime, out in the city, a glorious day came on. The sun went buzzing up the pink-and-yellow sky with a sound like that of a walking-doll's works, or of a big Dutch clock behind a door; banners waved from the castled heights, and bugles sang from every tower; the city gates rang with the cheers of the enthusiastic crowd. Up from cellars, down from lofts, off work-benches, and out at the doors of their masters' shops, dodging the thwacks of their masters' straps, "pop-popping" like corks from the necks of so many bottles, came apprentices, shop-boys, knaves and scullions, crying: "God save the King! Hurrah! Hurrah! Masters and work may go to Rome; our tasks shall wait on our own sweet wills; 't is holiday when the King comes home. God save the King! Hurrah!"

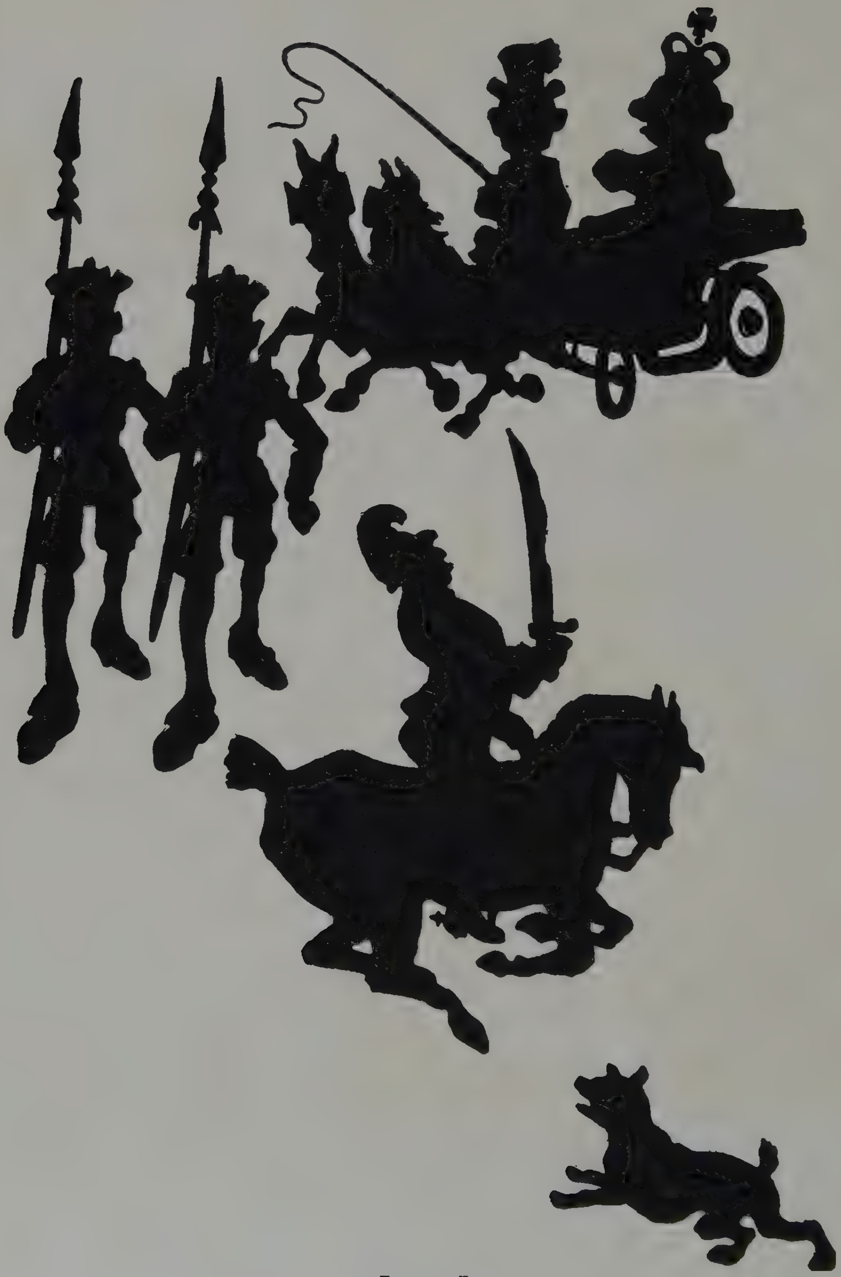


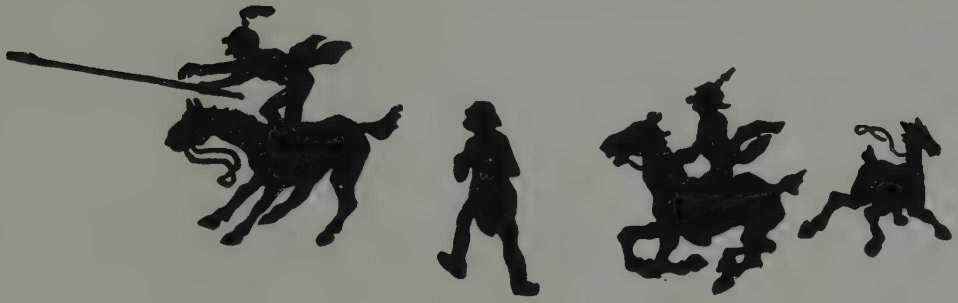
"HULLO!" HE SAID GRUFFLY. "COME, HURRY UP THE COFFEE!"

Then came the procession. There were first three regiments of trumpeters, all blowing different tunes; then fifteen regiments of mounted infantry on coal-black horses, forty squadrons of green-and-blue dragoons, and a thousand drummers and fifers in scarlet and blue and gold, making a thundering din with their rootle-te-tootle-te-tootle-te-rootle; and pretty well up to the front in the ranks was the King himself, bowing and smiling to the populace, with his hand on his breast; and after him the army, all in shining armor, just enough pounded to be picturesque, miles on miles of splendid men, all bearing the trophies of glorious war, and armed with lances, and bows and arrows, falchions, morgensterns, martels-de-fer, and other choice implements of justifiable homicide, and the reverse, such as hautboys and sackbuts and accordions and dudelsacks and Scotch bagpipes — a glorious sight!

And, as has been said before, the city gates rang with the cheers of the crowd, crimson banners waved over the city's pinnacled summits, and bugles blew, trumpets brayed, and drums beat until it seemed that wild uproar and rich display had reached its high millennium.

The black cat turned the coffee-mill. "My oh! My oh!" he said. "It certainly is not fair that those bench-legged turnspits with feet like so much leather should see the King marching home in his glory, while I, who go shod, as it were, in velvet, should hear only the sound through the scullery windows. It is not fair. It is no doubt true that 'The cat may mew, and the dog shall have his day,' but I have as much right to my day as he; and has it not been said from immemorial time that 'A cat may look at a king'? Indeed it has, quite as much as that the dog may have his day. I will not stand it; it is not fair. A cat may look at a king; and if any cat may look at a king, why, I am the cat who may. There are no other cats in the world; I am the only one. Poh! the cook may shout till his breath gives out, he cannot frighten me; for once I am going to have my fling!"

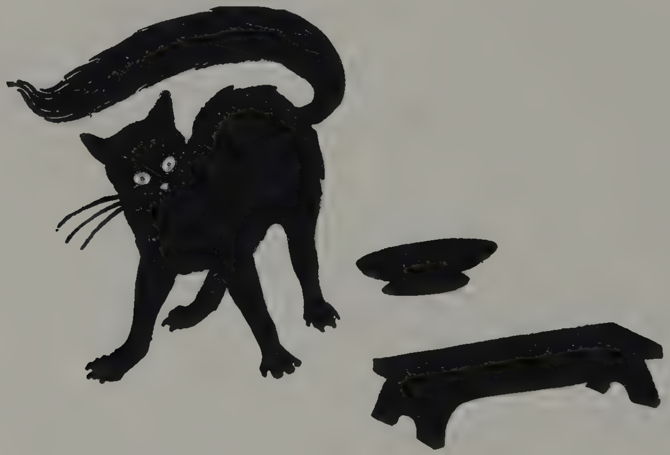




So he forthwith swallowed the coffee-mill, box, handle, drawer-knobs, coffee-well, and all, and was off to see the King.

So far, so good. But, ah! the sad and undeniable truth, that brightest joys too soon must end! Triumphs cannot last forever, even in a land of legends. There comes a reckoning.

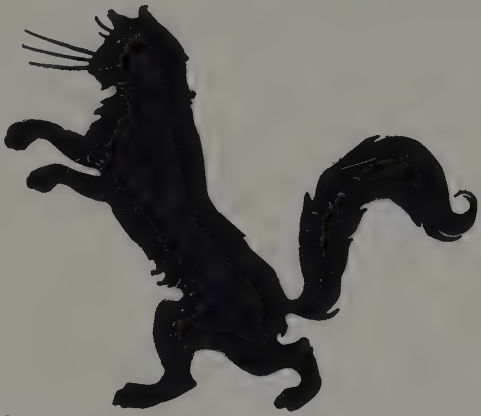
When the procession was past and gone, as all processions pass and go, vanishing down the shores of forgetfulness; when barons, marquises, dukes, and dons were gone, with their pennants and banners; when the last lancers had gone prancing past and were lost to sight down the circuitous avenue, Sooty Will, with drooping tail, stood by the palace gate, dejected. He was sour and silent and glum. Indeed, who would not be, with a coffee-mill on his conscience? To own up to the entire truth, the cat was feeling decidedly unwell. When suddenly the cook popped his head in at the scullery entry, crying, " How now, how now, you vagabonds! The war is done, but the breakfast is not. Hurry up, scurry up, scamper and trot! The cakes are all cooked and are piping hot! Then why is the coffee so slow? "



HE SWALLOWED THE COFFEE-MILL.

The King was in the dining-hall, in dressing-gown and slippers, irately calling for his breakfast!

The shamefaced, guilty cat ran hastily down the scullery stairs and hid under the refrigerator, with such a deep inward sensation of remorse that he dared not look the kind cook in the face. It now really seemed to him as if everything had gone wrong with the world, especially his own insides. This any one will readily believe who has ever swallowed a coffee-mill. He began to weep copiously.

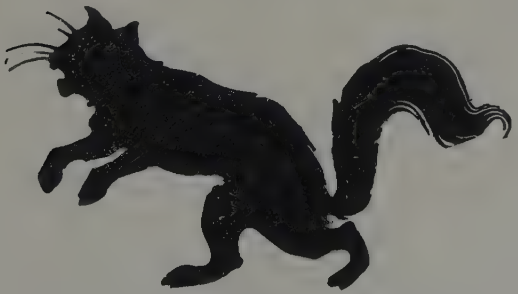


And Was Off to See the King.

The cook came into the kitchen. "Where is the coffee?" he said. Then, catching sight of the secluded cat, he stooped, crying, "Where is the coffee?"

The cat sobbed audibly. "Some one must have come into the kitchen while I ran out to look at the King!" he gasped, for there seemed to him no way out of the scrape but by telling a plausible untruth. "Some one must have come into the kitchen and stolen it!" And with that, choking upon the handle of the mill, which projected into his throat, he burst into inarticulate sobs.

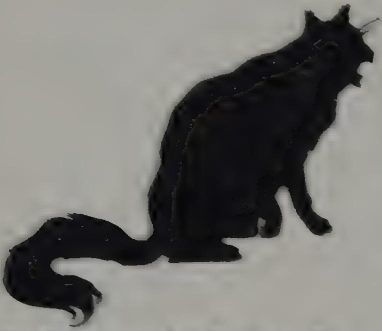
The cook, who was, in truth, a very kind-hearted man, sought to reassure the poor cat. "There; it is unfortunate, very; but do not weep; thieves thrive in kings' houses!" he said, and, stooping, he began to stroke the drooping cat's back to show that he held the weeping creature blameless.



The Cat Was Feeling Decidedly Unwell.

Sooty Will's heart leaped into his throat.

"Oh, oh!" he half gasped, "oh, oh! If he rubs his great hands down my back he will feel the corners of the coffee-mill through my ribs as sure as fate! Oh, oh! I am a gone cat!" And with that, in an agony of apprehension lest his guilt and his falsehood be thus presently detected, he humped up his back as high in the air as he could, so that the corners of the mill might not make bumps in his sides and that the mill might thus remain undiscovered.



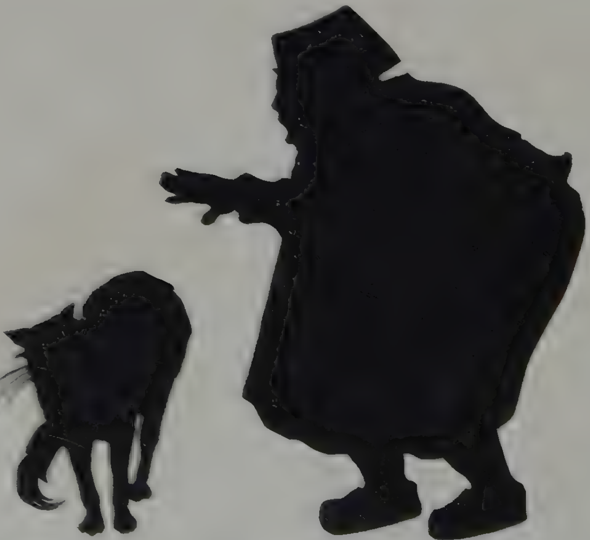
It Seemed As If All Had Gone Wrong.

But, alas! he forgot that coffee-mills turn. As he humped up his back to cover his guilt, the coffee-mill inside rolled over, and, as it rolled, began to grind — *rr-rr-rr-rr-rr-rr-rr-rr-rr-rr!*

"Oh, oh! you have swallowed the mill!" cried the cook.

"No, no," cried the cat, "I was only thinking aloud."

At that out stepped the Genius that Lived under the Great Ovens, and, with

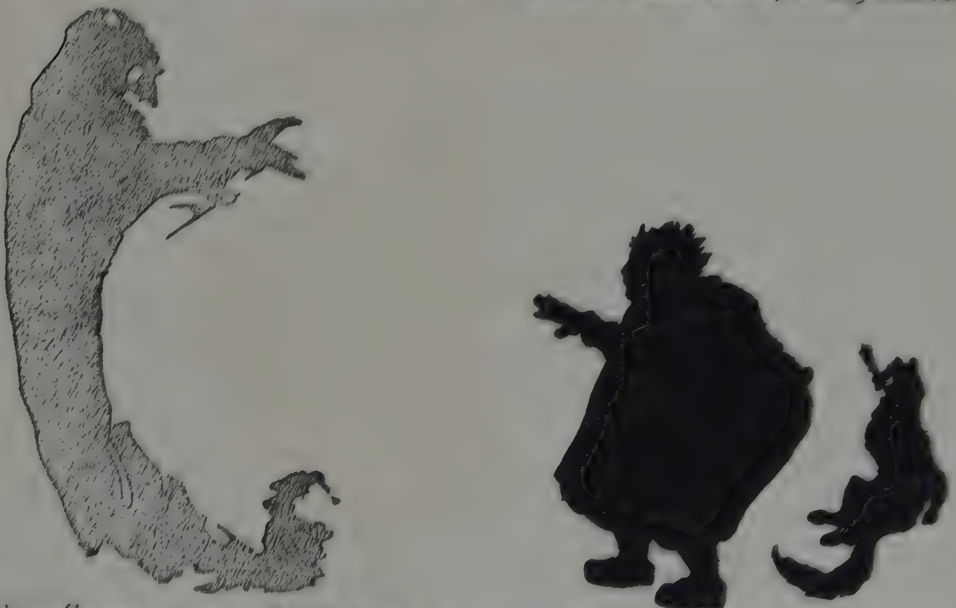


"Where Is the Coffee?" Said the Cook.

his finger pointed at the cat, said in a frightful voice, husky with wood-ashes: "Miserable and pusillanimous beast! By telling a falsehood to cover a wrong you have only made bad matters worse. For betraying man's kindness to cover your shame, a curse shall be upon you and all your kind until the end of the world. Whenever men stroke you in kindness, remembrance of your guilt shall make you hump up your back with shame, as you did to avoid being found out. And in order that the reason for this curse shall never be forgotten, whenever man is kind to a cat the sound of the grinding of a coffee-mill inside shall perpetually remind him of your guilt and shame!"

With that the Genius vanished in a cloud of smoke.

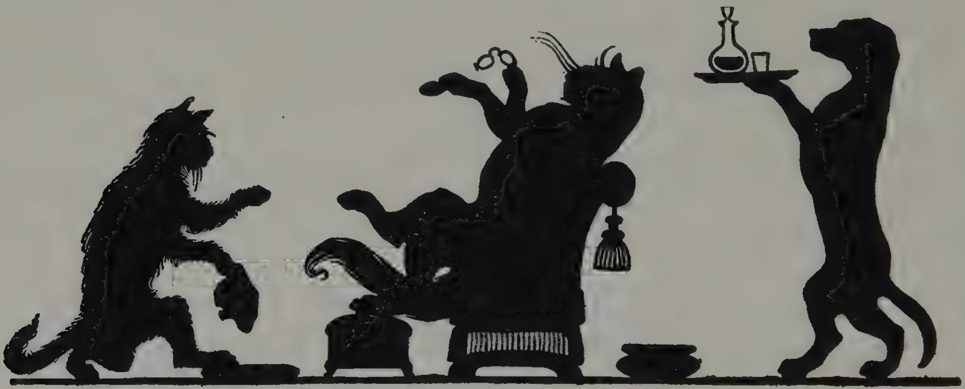
And it was even as he said. From that day Sooty Will could never abide having his back stroked without humping it up to conceal the mill within him; and never did he hump up his back but the coffee-mill began slowly to grind, *rr-rr-rr-rr!* inside him; so that, even in the prime of life, before his declining days had come, being seized



Out Stepped the Genius That Lived Under the Great Ovens.

upon by a great remorse for these things which might never be amended, he retired to a home for aged and reputable cats, and there, so far as the records reveal, lived the remainder of his days in charity and repentance.

But the curse has come down even to the present day — as the Genius that Lived under the Great Ovens said — and still maintains, though cats have probably forgotten the facts, and so, when stroked, hump up their backs and purr as if these actions were a matter of pride instead of being a blot upon their family record.



He Retired to the House for Aged and Respectable Cats.

Ye Ballad of Scullion Jack

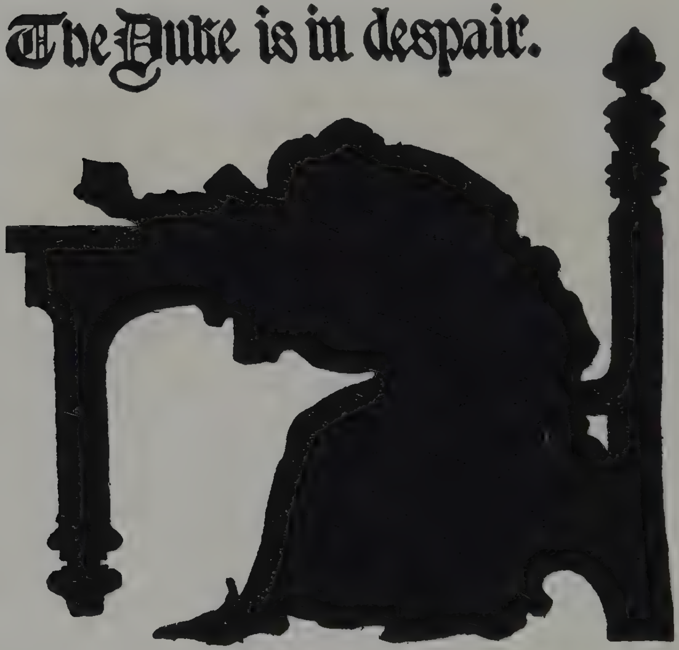
Canto One

The Minstrel sings:

THE snow lies deep on Castle-knowe;
The hills are shod with ice;
The walls are filled with gnawing rats;
The wainscot squeaks with mice;
And all stands ironed fast indoors;
Who goes out, goeth a-wing;
The ports are double-locked and barred;
There passes not anything.

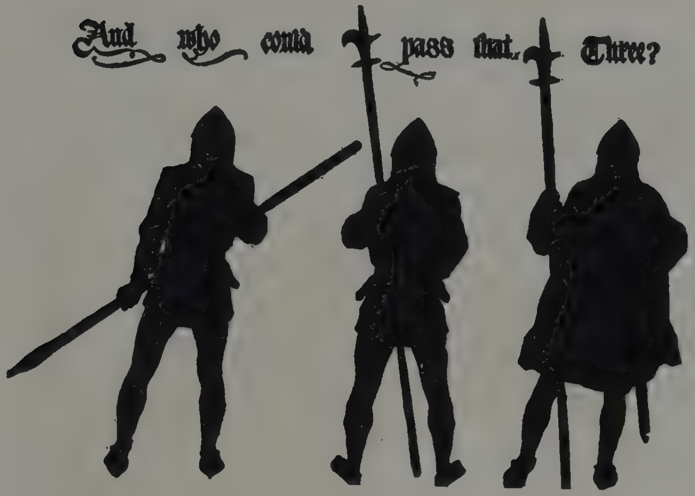
And men run here, and men run there,
Eke they run up and down,
The footman after the little foot-page,
And the foot-page after the clown.

For the Duke hath lost the King's signet-ring,
Seal of his house and line.
Lonely and drear he sits, bitter with fear
Of punishment most condign.


The Duke is in despair.

Yet no man kens who hath taken the ring;
Ill are the castle-folk;
It hath flown away 'twixt the close of day
And the hour when the new day broke.
No man kens who hath taken it,
Nor kens how the deed was done;
Hard-locked was the Duke's bedchamber door,
Enter there might none.
And there beside the chamber door
Stout men-at-arms stood three,

To keep safe guard o'er their sovereign lord.
And who could pass that three?


And who could pass that Three?

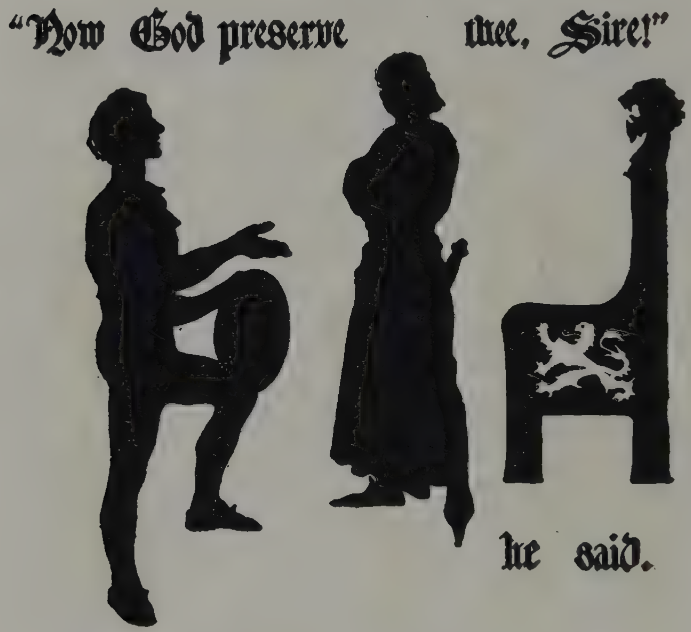
The Duke hath taken a solemn vow,
A solemn vow vows he;
"Who findeth the ring of my lord, the King,
Rewarded well shall be!
He shall have my fair young daughter to wife,
And the third of my lands in fee;
And he shall have three hundred crowns;
Lord Seneschal he shall be!"

Canto Two

Down 'mid the smoky turnspits,
Clad all in grimy black,
Sitteth a lad of countenance sad;
Men call him "Scullion Jack."
He toileth by day for the turnspits,
In garments all tatters and bags,

And sleepeth by night, in the wretchedest plight,
Outstretched on a heap of rags.

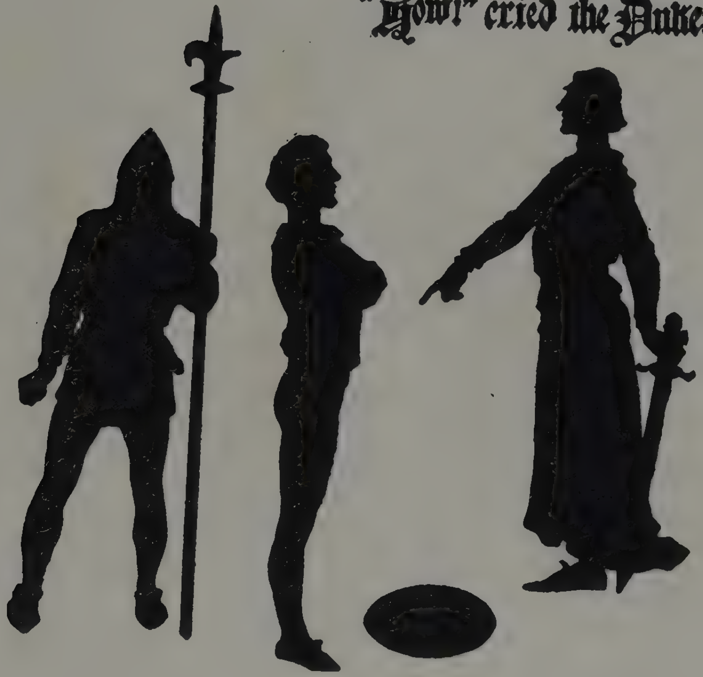
Up to the Duke's high chamber
This grimy cook's-knave went,


"Now God preserve thee, Sire!"
he said.

To where, in a chair, in dark despair,
His ill-starred master leant:
"Now, God preserve thee, sire!" he said,
"And keep thee safe and sound!
Give me thy daughter fair to wed
And the signet shall be found."

"How!" cried the Duke, blood-red with rage,
"Durst thou speak so to me,
Thou beggar churl? I'll see thee twirl
Upon the gallows-tree!"

"And lose the ring?" said the cook's-knave,
"And eke thine head beside;
Also thy wife, and daughter so fair —
All for a pinch of pride?

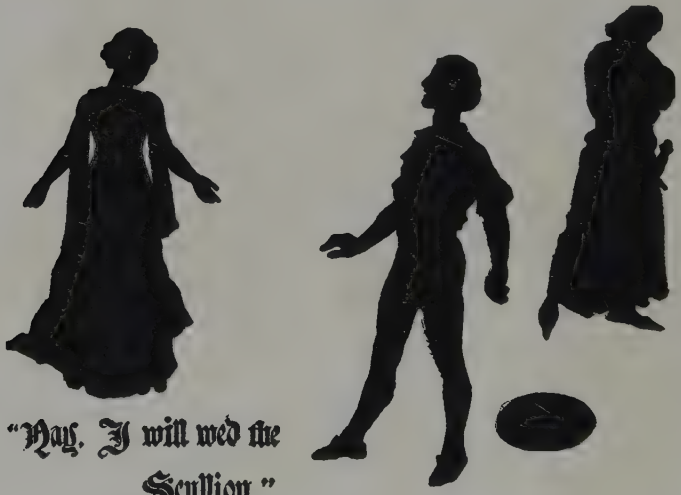


"How!" cried the Duke.

"My birthright stands as good as thine,
Since Adam was my sire;
Thou eatest the victual, 't is true enow,
While the scullion tendeth the fire.
But which of us will the better be
When both of us lie dead —
I, for the lack of breath to breathe,
Thou, for the lack of a head?

" Shall not men say, an thou hast me hanged,
And the scullion's story is heard,
That a lord of so high a lineage
Should better have kept his word? "

Up spake the Duke's young daughter;
Her name was Ethelind.
She was fair as the fairest daisies
That dance in the summer wind:

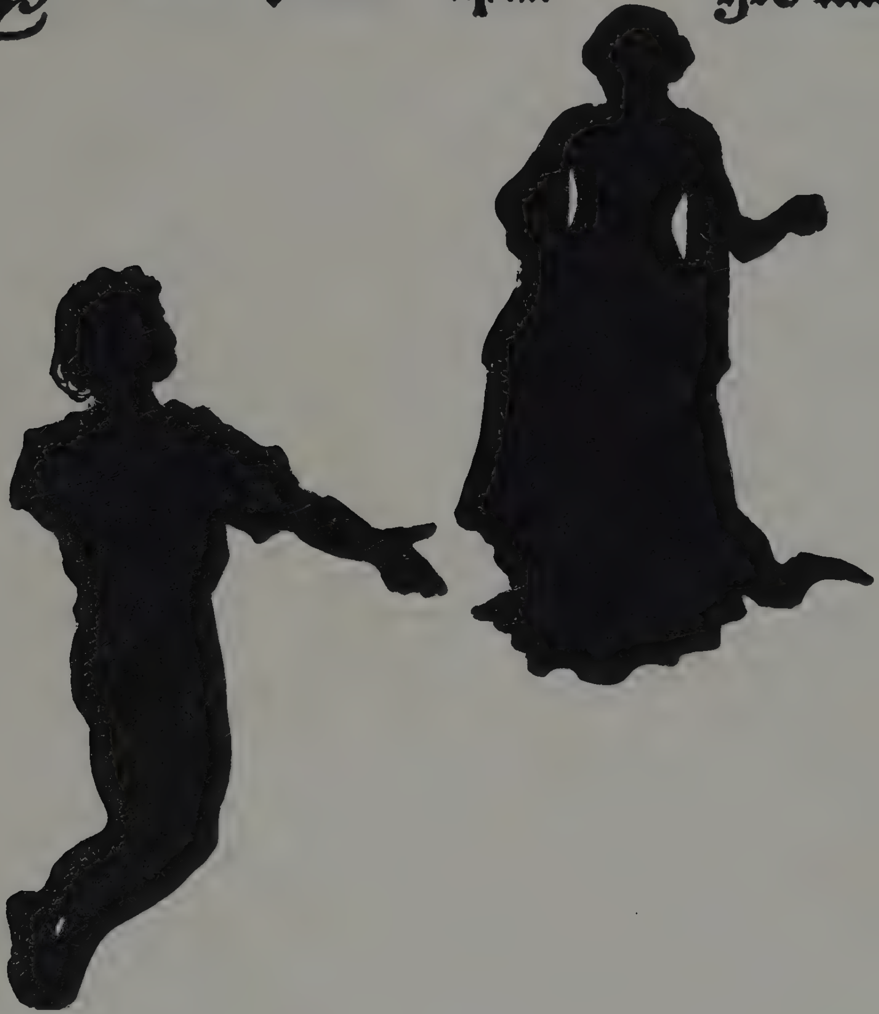


"Nay, I will wed the Scullion,"

" Nay; I will wed the scullion," she said;
" I will be a beggar's wife.
I would rather be sold like a trinket of gold,
Than that thou shouldst forfeit thy life! "

" Then, haste thee, scullion, haste thee;
Unriddle this riddle for me;
For if you fail, by the star-light pale,
It shall go ill with thee! "

He hath fallen upon his knee.



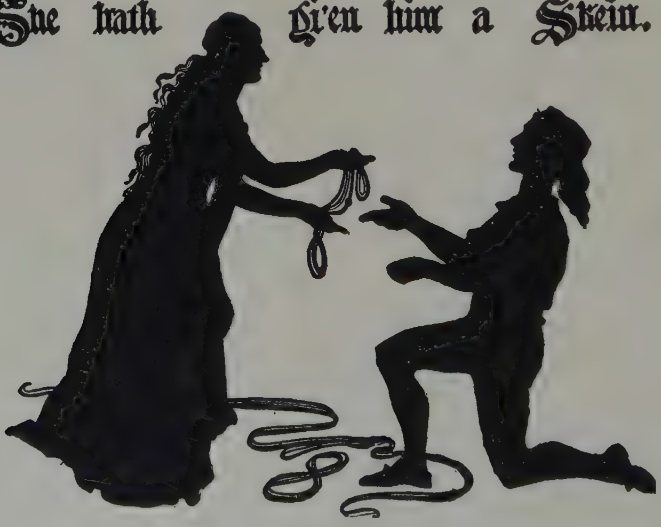
Canto Three

The scullion climbs to my lady's bower,
  And falleth upon his knee,

Saying, " Lend me a skein of crimson grain,
To unravel this mystery! "

But the tears they race down her wan white face:
How, how can she endure
To wed this base-born scullion?
Cries she: " I thee adjure,
By the mother's love who bore thee,
Now tell me, what is thy name?
How can a woman adore thee,
To whom thou bringest but shame? "
" By my mother's love, in sooth," he said,
I bring thee but little shame.

" My name is Jack o' the Glen-Side;
I am Laird of the Lands of Lea;
My father's name was Adam the Graeme,
Thy father's enemy.
My father's name was Adam the Graeme,
'T was he whom thy father slew;

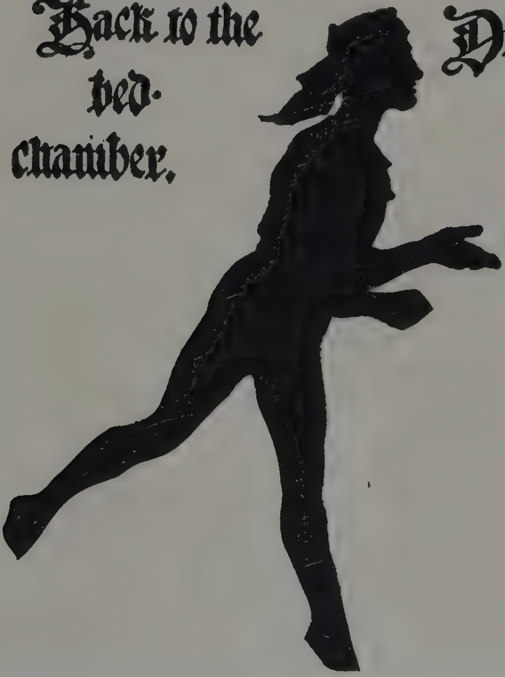


She hath gi'en him a Skein.

Yet year on year, as a scullion here,
Have I served for the love of you!

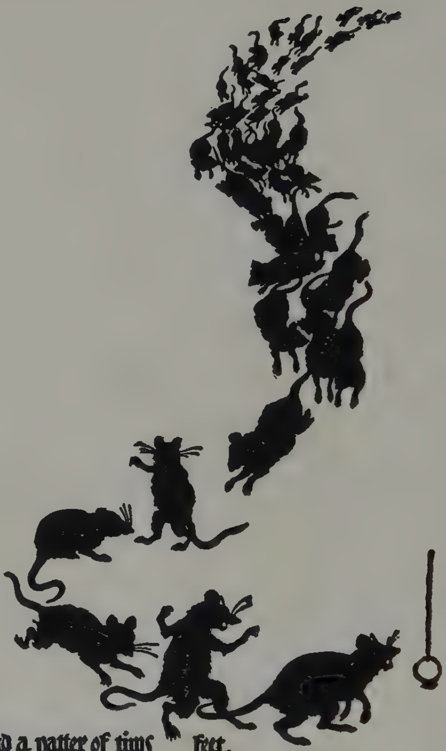
"You are the great Duke's daughter;
I, but a poor outlaw;
Yet, though lands have I few, I have loved thee true
Since first thy face I saw.
So I shall love thee, ever,
Though short this life shall be."
Then "Never," she cried, "no; never
Shalt thou hang on the gallows-tree!"

She hath gi'en him a skein of the crimson grain;
"My lover, my lover!" she said;
And she hath taken her golden sleeve
And bound it about his head;



Back to the Duke's bed-chamber.

And she has done off her finger-ring;
Saying, "Take, now, this golden band,
My lord and my knight, our troth to plight!"
Hath laid it into his hand;
And he hath kissed her bonny red mou';
He hath kissed her cherry-red cheek;
Said, "We shall be wed ere the week be sped;
Ay, or two days out o' the week!"

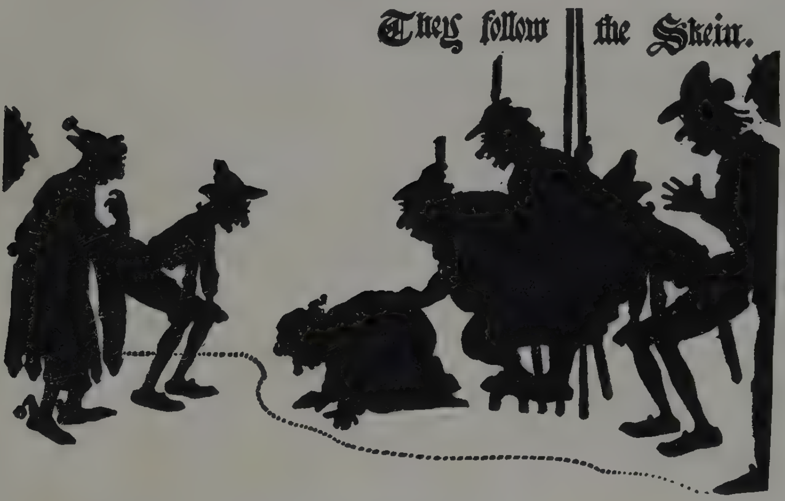

And a patter of tiny feet.

She hath gi'en him a skein of the crimson grain:
A skein? Nay, two. Ay, three!
He is gone to the Duke's bedchamber
To unravel the mystery.

Canto Four

He hath taken the skein of the crimson grain,
And hath hanged it upon a chair,
Hath tethered the ring, and left it to swing
Like a sunbeam caught in a snare.
Eke he hath taken some ripe old cheese,
Hath toasted it good and brown;
Across the floor, by three, by four,
He smears the hot savory down.

Also, he smeareth the golden ring
With the cheese; it is good and strong.
None here shall abide in the evening-tide:
Departed is the throng.



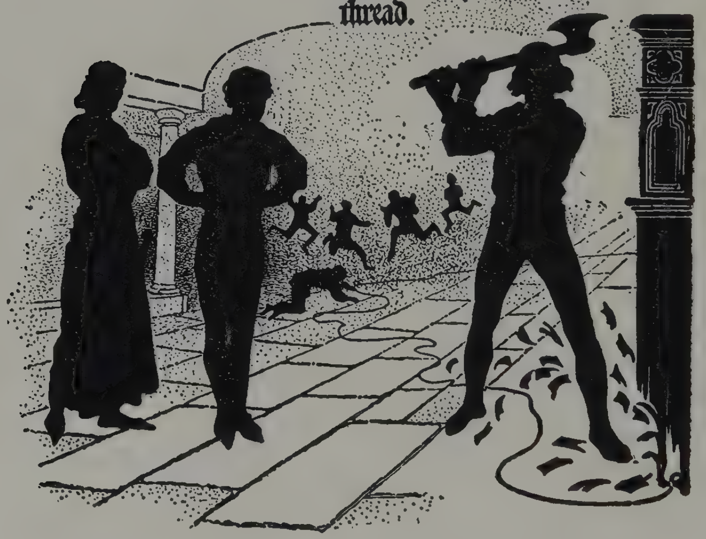
They follow the Skein.

At the first dull dong of midnight,
As it clangs through the world so still,
From the Duke's dark chamber comes a sound
Like a whisper, thin and shrill.
A sound as of shrill, high laughter,
And a patter of tiny feet!
Oh! the men-at-arms go crossing themselves
A gruesome sight to greet!

They have burst into the chamber.
"How? What?" Was nobody there?
Here is the bread which was under the bed;
Where is the cheese in the chair?
"Lights, lights!" wild cry the watchmen.
"Lights, lights!" There are lights at the door!

Like a line blood-red the crimson thread
Lies stretched on the chamber-floor.

Across the board to the chimney-hoard
Where the soot falls thick and black,
They follow the skein of the crimson grain



Ever, before them runneth the thread.

That betrayeth the bold thief's track.
Across the board to the chimney-hoard,
Where the flakes of black soot fall,
They follow the skein of crimson grain
To a rat-hole in the wall.

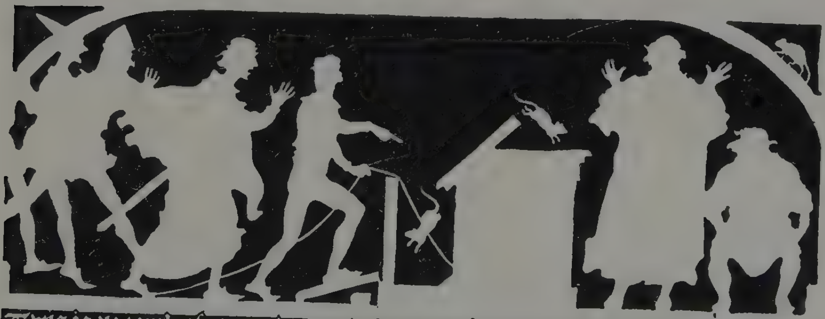
"*Where runneth that skein of crimson grain,*"
Cries the scullion, "*there ran he.*
Through wall and beam, by cranny and seam.
Now follow him speedily!"

They have ripped the rotten wainscot;
They have torn up the rotting floor;
They have hewn the beams asunder;
They have passed the chamber-door;
They have burst the panels in the wall;
Yet, ever before them, on,
The silken thread of crimson red
Goes where the thief has gone.

It hath passed the lowest guard-room;
It hath passed the dungeon-keep;
And, last of all, the moldering wall
Where the dead in the chapel sleep.
In the chapel old and hoary,
Where the gray monks service sing,
Within the gloom of an ancient tomb
They hear a faint ting-ting!

Canto Five

They wrenched the moldering stones apart
From around the ancient bier,
And there upshone, from the moldering stone,
Full many a jewel clear,



Thys is ye tomb of ye Dukes dead father · within it shineth many a dazzling jewel.

And many a coin of fine red gold,
And trinkets of silver white,
Rare workmanship, reft out of Castle-knowe
By the church rats, in the night.

"The ring!" they cried. For the signet-ring,
With many a jewel more
In a shimmering heap lay glimmering
Upon the dusty floor.
The Duke hath caught up the signet-ring
From out that jewel-mine,
"Give o'er thy claim to my daughter," he says,
"And the rest, Sir Knave, is thine!"

"Nay; I will have none of thy gold, Lord Duke;
Nor will I have aught of thy fee;
I have a hold of my own," he said,
"In the woods of the North Countrie."

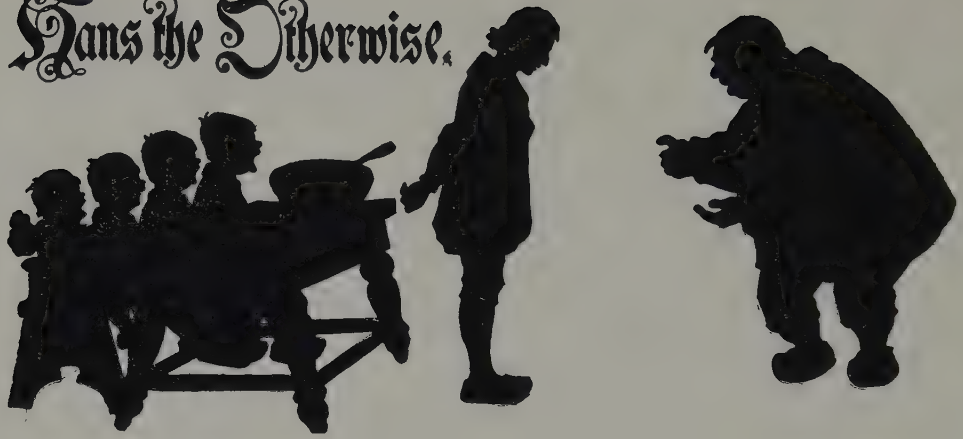
"For the sake of St. Gandelyn!" cries the Duke,
"Tell me, knave, what is thy name?"
"Men call me the Laird o' the Lands of Lea;
My father was Adam the Graeme.

Hark! now the trumpets blow

And I would marry thy daughter fair,
Last of thy noble line,
Before the rood, to end the feud
Betwixt your house and mine."

The Duke hath laughed; the Duke hath cried;
For life is never so dear
As when one reckons to lose it,
But is saved. How the people cheer!
And hear! they are ringing the bells, the bells!
Hark! Hark! how the trumpets blow!
Bring cakes and wine! Let the firelight shine
For the wedding on Castle-knowe!

Hans the Otherwise.



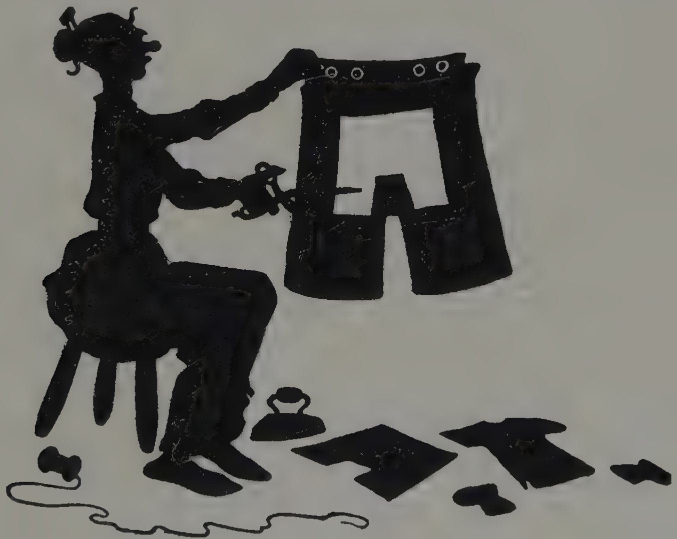
VERY OLD people may remember hearing their grandfathers say that a great many years ago the Baron of the Land of Nod asked two questions of his three wise men which none of them could answer. If they do not remember, it will not matter at all: a great many things have happened which history has found it convenient to forget.

But that is neither here nor there. The Baron offered great rewards for any answer to his questions. But although all the wisest men in the world tried, no one succeeded. The questions remained unanswered year after year, until "to answer the Baron of Nod" became a common saying among the people, meaning simply neither more nor less than to do the impossible. What was more, the whole story had grown so old that it had been made over into a popular song; so that it must have been very old indeed; and this was the song:

HANS THE OTHERWISE

If you seek to find a fortune
By your wit, do not delay:
To the Land of Nod betake you —
If your wit can find the way.
There's a rose-bush by the roadside,
And two shrubs beside the stream,
With three little hills behind them,
And a castle white as cream,
Where, if you can answer questions
At the hazard of your neck,
You will find both fame and fortune,
And have money by the peck!

Now it so happened that in the little village of Narrheit there lived a lad whose name nobody knew. The floods had left him in the rye-field when he was but a baby, and his parents were past all finding out. Johann Barthel, the woodman, found him, and took him home

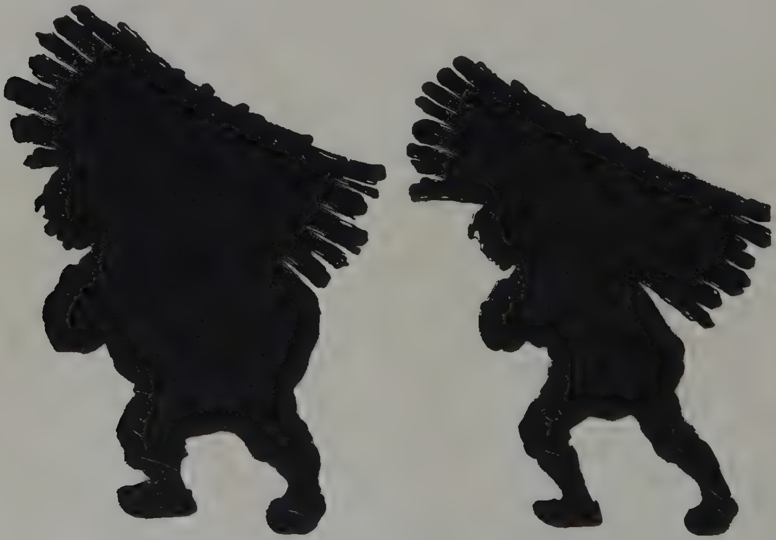


Johann's Wife Cut Down Her Husband's Clothes to Fit the Little Fellow.

to grow up with the little Barthels. Johann's wife cut down her husband's clothes to fit the little fellow: and Johann himself cut down his grown-up name from Johann to " Hans " to give to the youngster who had lost his own.

As the lad grew up, he was not at all like the small Barthels, whose noses all turned up like little red buttons, for his turned down like a hawk's beak; and while they were one and all as stumpy as their noses, he shot up like a young tree. And, too, while the little Barthels chattered all day long without ever saying a thing worth listening to, Hans, when not at work, sat still in the corner, thinking; and when questioned as to his thoughts by the meddlesome villagers, always gave answers that left them even more puzzled than they were before.

This was something that the good, thick-headed people of Narrheit could not understand; and like all such good, thick-headed folk, the dull villagers, believing themselves to be most undoubtedly wise, called the lad, not " Hans the Wise," but " Hans the Otherwise," and thought him neither more nor less than a blockhead.



Helping Johann with the Fagots.

Hans cared little for that, and bearing no grudge, went quietly about his business, helping Johann with the fagots, saying little, and thinking much — which is more than all the rest of the villagers could have done together.

At last, however, the bench beside the Barthel family porridge-pot grew overcrowded. And one day, when Hans came home from the forest, there was not an inch left at his end.

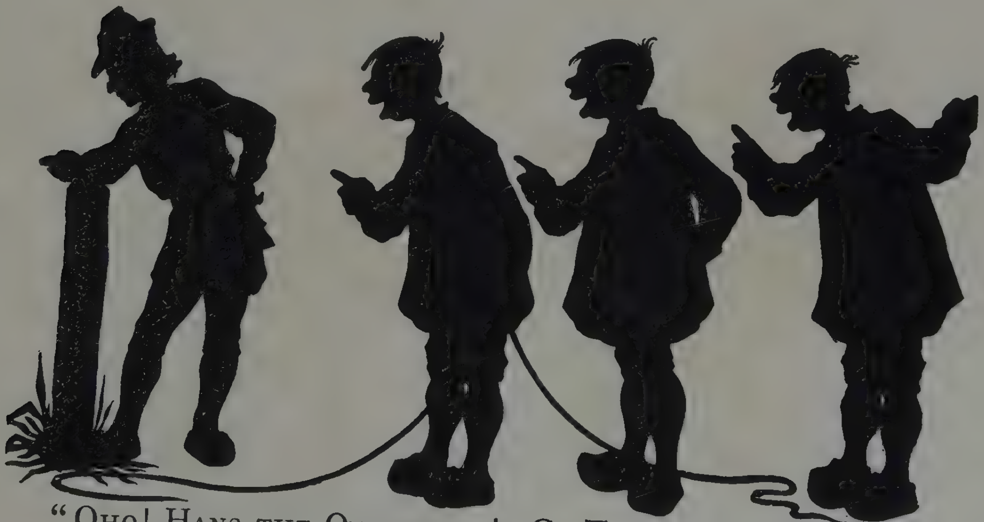
"Why don't you sit down?" growled Johann, his heavy voice making little waves dance all around the rim of the big blue bowl.

"There is no room," faltered Hans, hanging his head.

"What! No room?" cried the father, counting upon his thick red fingers: "One, two, three, four — four on the bench, and there is no room? Elsa, Elsa!" he called to his wife, who was frying the sausages out in the kitchen, "there are only four boys sitting down; yet there is no room for Hans the Otherwise."

"Then Hans the Otherwise must find room for himself somewhere else!" replied the shrill voice of the mother.

There was no help for it.



"Oho! Hans the Otherwise! Go Think for a Living!"

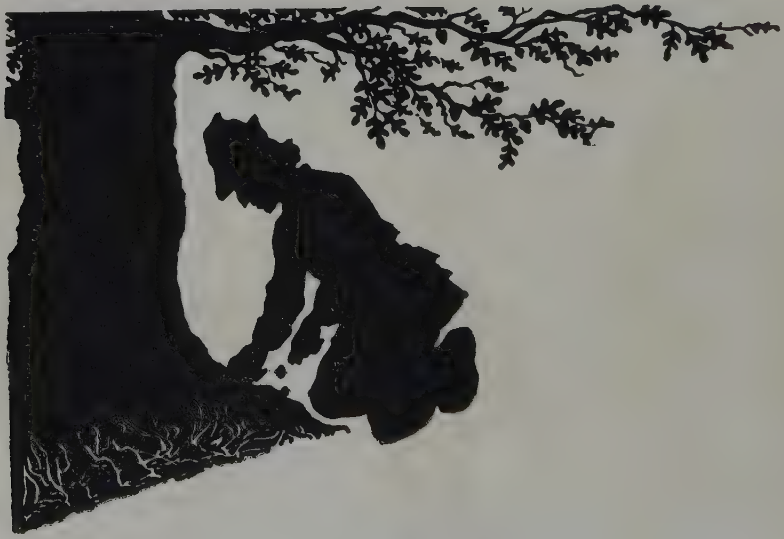
Hans turned away without a word, and went from house to house through the village, seeking shelter. The butcher gave him to eat; the baker gave him to drink; and the candlestick-maker gave him five farthings for good luck. But "There is no room!" said all the rest, and closed the door in his face — so that he came to the end of the village homeless and hopeless. And there the idlers mocked him as he leaned against a post by the way.

"Oho! Hans the Otherwise!" cried one. "Go think for a living!"

"Oho!" jeered another. "Go set the river on fire with your answers that nobody understands!"

And "Oho!" sneered still another. "Go answer the Baron of Nod!"

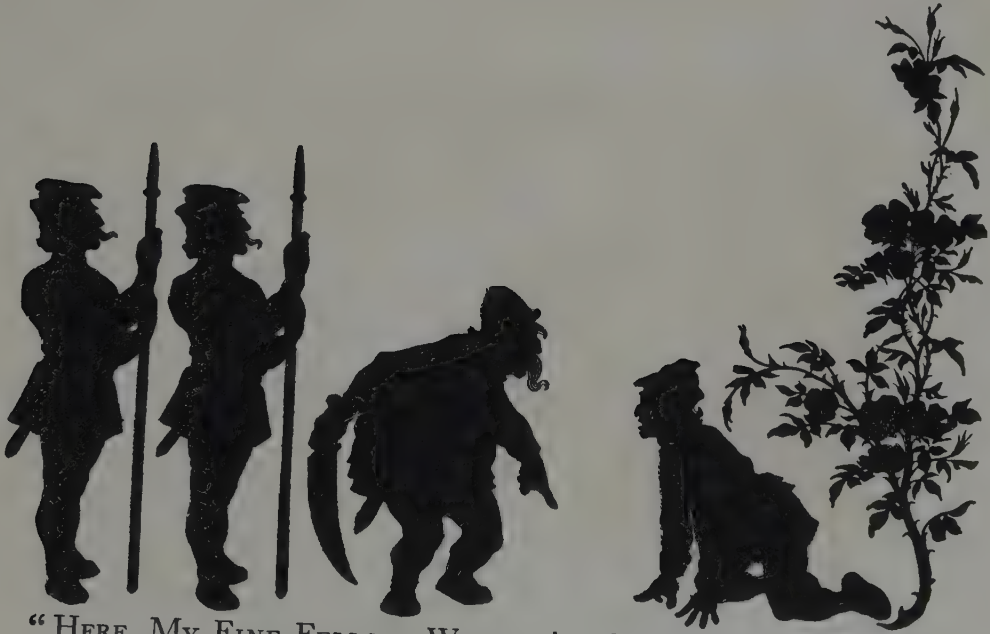
At this the crowd shouted with laughter. But Hans pulled his belt tighter about his faded gabardine; and "Thank you for nothing," said he curtly. "I will take your advice. Answering questions is not so hard when one knows how; and a fool may know what the wise men haven't found out. Perhaps I *can* answer the Baron."



Hans Buried His Farthings.

At this the loafers laughed so hard that the tears rolled down their cheeks. But Hans turned his back on the village and all, and struck out sturdily down the highway. When he came to the cross-roads he buried his five farthings under the old oak tree, and set out in earnest on his journey.

He wandered over land and sea, through strange countries and among strange people; and it was a long, long while before he found the Land of Nod. And when he did come to it at last, he did not know it at all. For so many years had passed that the two little shrubs beside the stream had sprung up into a great forest, in which the trees stood so close together that the birds had to turn their mouths edgewise to sing. The rose-bush had become a vast jungle of briers under which the road was lost to sight. And the three little hills had grown into huge mountains so black and so high that even on the brightest sum-



"HERE, MY FINE FELLOW, WHERE ARE YOU GOING SO FAST?"

mer mornings the sun never rose above them until eleven o'clock next day.

"Well," said Hans, as he drew a long breath. "I don't know where in the world I am, but Get-There never sits down!" So he fell upon his hands and knees to follow the road under the rose-bush. He had crawled only a little way, however, when he was challenged by the guard. "Here, my fine fellow," cried the Captain, "where are you going so fast?"

Hans rubbed his knees. "You don't call this fast, do you?" said he.

"Well, so slow, then," bellowed the Captain. "Where are you going?"

"I wish I knew!" replied Hans.

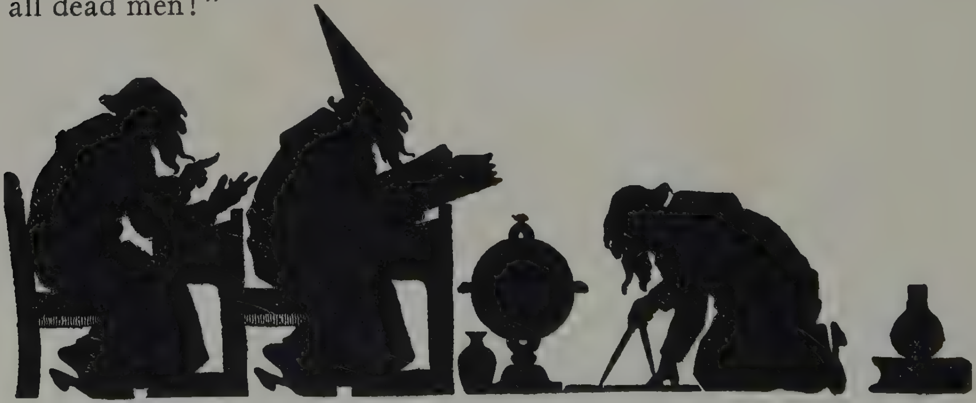
"Oh, pshaw! Let him go," cried one. "He is a fool."

"Not so," interposed another. "Not so; for any fool would know where he was going. Where do you come from?"

"From Narrheit," said Hans.

"What did I tell you?" cried the first. "He *is* a fool, for they are all fools at Narrheit."

"Well, then," exclaimed the Captain, "he is certainly a wise man for coming away! We must take him to the Baron, or we are all dead men!"

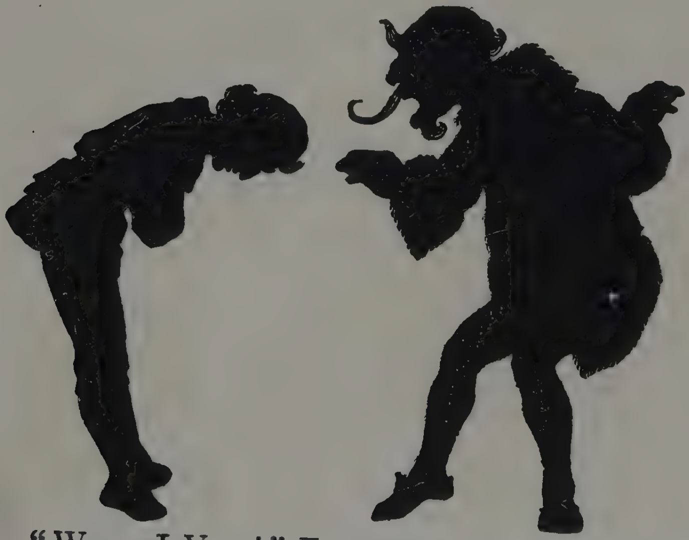


In One Corner the Three Wise Men Sat.

So they led him over the moss-grown draw-bridge, and up dark stone stairways into the great hall, where the dust lay on the floor as thick as a Brussels carpet. Moth-eaten tapestries flapped upon the moldy walls; the tall wax candles had all burned down so low that they had turned them upside down and were burning them the other way; while the very air itself had not been out in the sun for so long that it had turned yellow as saffron. Down in one cobwebby corner the Three Wise Men sat, hunting desperately through all the realms of science and philosophy for an answer. The walls were chalked full of mathematical problems so abstruse that it made Hans' head ache to look at them. And perched high up on his mildewed throne, the Baron frowned down, with dust inch-deep upon his bristling brows, and his clothes so old-fashioned that they were just coming back into style.

"Gr-r-r!" he growled, impatiently pulling his musty mustaches. "Have you found those answers yet?"

"Oh, your Grace," gasped the first, as he fell on his knees. "I have gone through the arithmetic from fractions to cube root, and if — if —"



"Well, I Vow!" Exclaimed the Baron.

"And I," stammered the second, "have worked the whole algebra from theorems to quadratics, but — but — "

"And I," faltered the third, "have demonstrated every proposition in the geometry, and — and — "

The Baron gritted his teeth like a gross of slate-pencils. "I am tired of your arithmetical 'ifs,' your geometrical 'ands,' and your algebraic 'buts'!" he roared in a fury. "If you don't answer those questions in so many words by supper-time, I'll — I'll — "

Indeed, there is no telling what he might have done; but just then he spied Hans.

"Hullo!" he cried. "What's this? Another wise man? Gr-r-r! What do *you* know, sir?"

"I know that I am not a wise man," replied Hans calmly.

The Baron stared, surprised. "Well, I vow," he exclaimed, "*that* is more, to begin with, than any of the others knew! But can you answer questions?"

Hans rubbed his head. "I cannot say that I cannot," said he.

"Why not?" demanded the Baron, astonished.

"Why, because," said Hans, "if I say that I *cannot* answer a question, it will prove that I *can,* for then I shall have answered the one you have just asked me."

"That's so," mused the Baron, twisting his mustache. "I hadn't thought of that! Perhaps I would better ask the questions, and see."

Hans bowed, and the Baron began.

"The King has forbidden my joking," said he, "because my jokes are too broad. Now, sir, tell me, how broad may a good joke be?"

"A good joke," replied Hans, slowly — "a *very* good joke, may be just as broad as its wit is deep."

The Baron looked puzzled. "And pray," said he, "what is the depth of wit?"

"The depth of wit," returned Hans quickly, "is precisely the same as the height of the ridiculous."

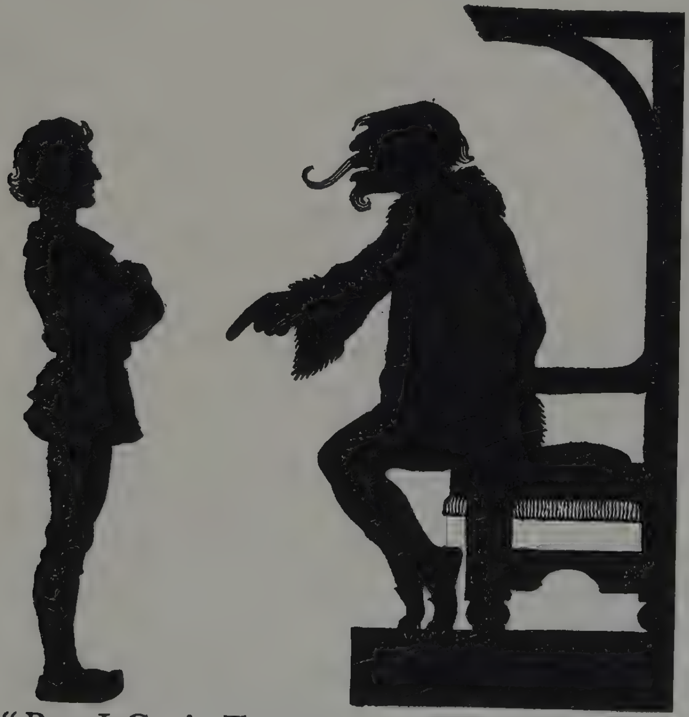
The Baron looked more puzzled than ever. "Oh, come," said he, with a frown, for Barons do not like to be trifled with. "That is all true enough, no doubt; but tell me now, with no more trifling, what is the height of the ridiculous to a hair's breadth?"

"Five feet nine inches," said Hans, with a smile.

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" ejaculated the Baron. "How do you make that out?"

"Why," replied Hans, bowing modestly, "you think *me* ridiculous for giving such an answer — and five feet nine inches is just my height!"

The Baron looked up at the ceiling, and then he looked down at the floor, perplexed. "We-e-ell," said he slowly, rubbing his chin, "that may be so, too. But — I don't see — what that has to do with the matter."



"BUT I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE TO ASK," SNAPPED THE BARON.

"Neither do I," said Hans. "That is for you to decide. I only give answers to the questions."

"That's so," assented the Baron, "I hadn't thought of that"; and he scratched his head. "You do answer them; and all your answers certainly seem fair, and plain enough, and easy to understand, so far as they go; yet I don't seem to have gotten where I want to get. I suppose it must be the fault of the questions."

"You might ask something more," suggested Hans.

"But I can't think of anything more to ask," snapped the Baron. "We seem to have come to a sort of stopping-place."

"I am ready to go on," said Hans, accommodatingly.

"But I don't know how to go on!" roared the Baron. "I don't know where we are, nor how we got here, and I can't see how to get to anywhere else!"

"Well, you needn't shake your fist at me!" protested Hans. "It is not my fault."

"That's so," apologized the Baron, crossly. "I hadn't thought of that. I suppose I may as well give up and take that for an answer; though I don't know any more about how broad a joke may be than I did before."

"I'm sorry," said Hans. "I did the best I could for you. But let's go on with the second question!"

"All right," said the Baron, brightening up. "Where can I find a buried treasure?"

For a moment Hans stood dumfounded. Then he suddenly remembered his five farthings. "Oh, that is easy enough," said he. "Just dig under the old oak at the cross-roads."

Two regiments of soldiers and five huge wagons were sent galloping away in mad haste to the spot. In a short time they returned with the five farthings — one in each wagon.

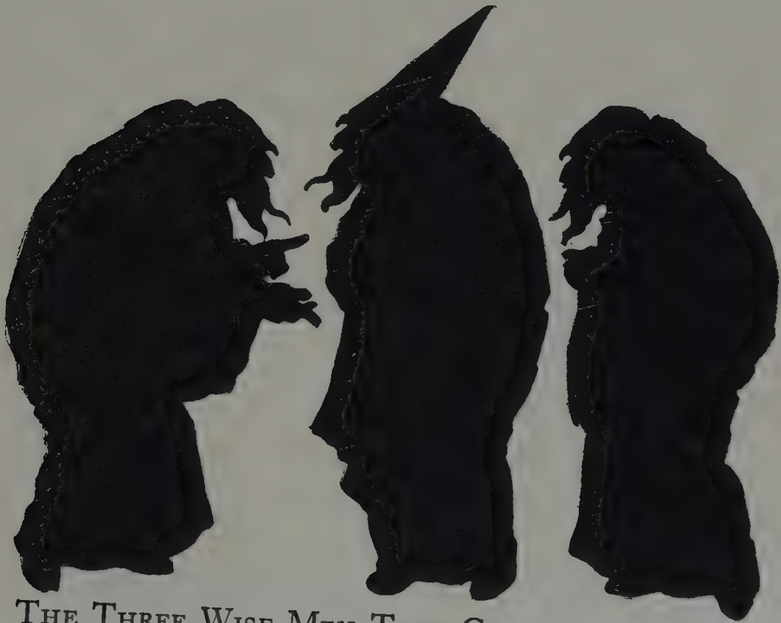
"*Donnerschlag und Dunkelheit!*" sputtered the Baron, when he saw the five poor little rusty farthings. "Throw the rascal into prison!"

"Oh, come, that isn't fair!" cried Hans, indignantly. "Did they not find the treasure buried just where I said they would?"

"Oh, yes," stuttered the Baron; "but it is such a small treasure!"

"To be sure," said Hans, frankly, "it *is* small. But you didn't ask *how large* it was; you asked only *where* it was buried."

"That's so," acknowledged the Baron, chagrined. "I hadn't thought of that. It's just my luck!" said he, disgustedly. "I might just as well have asked for a large treasure as not, while we were at it;" and he chewed his mustache ruefully. "Well," said he, at length, grinning gloomily, "you've answered my questions, and I am neither the wiser nor the wealthier for being answered. But I'm a man of my word, and you shall have a heaping peck of gold. But as for those Wise Men," he stormed, seeking a vent for his rage somewhere, "I shall discharge them and give their back pay all to you, together with their places."



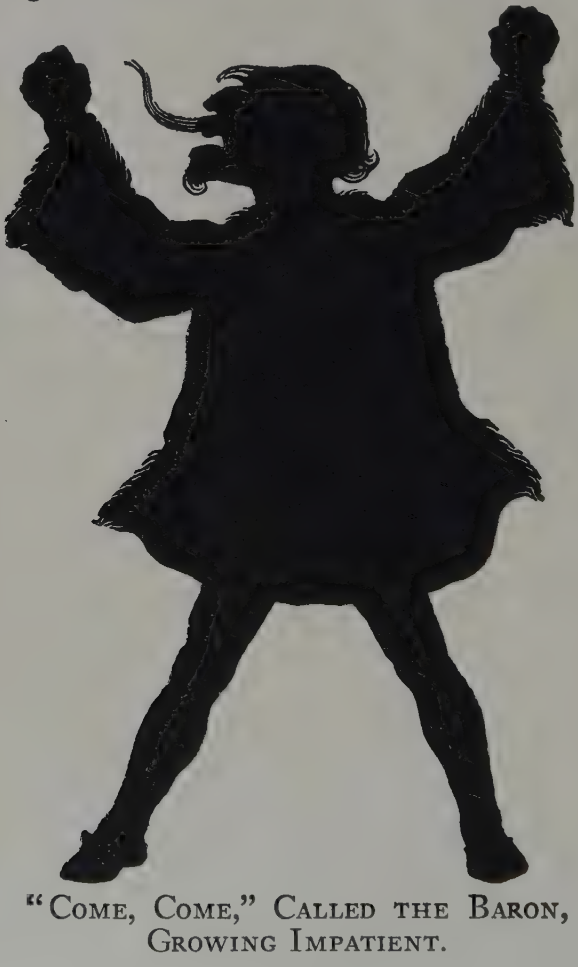
THE THREE WISE MEN TOOK COUNSEL TOGETHER.

Then the Three Wise Men were furious. It was bad enough to lose a good job in hard times, let alone losing their back pay too. So they conspired together against Hans, saying to the Baron:

"If this fellow is wiser than we are, Sire, he can, no doubt, answer all the questions we can ask him."

"To be sure," nodded the Baron.

"And if he cannot," said they, craftily, "he is not so wise as we are, and you ought not to keep him in our places."

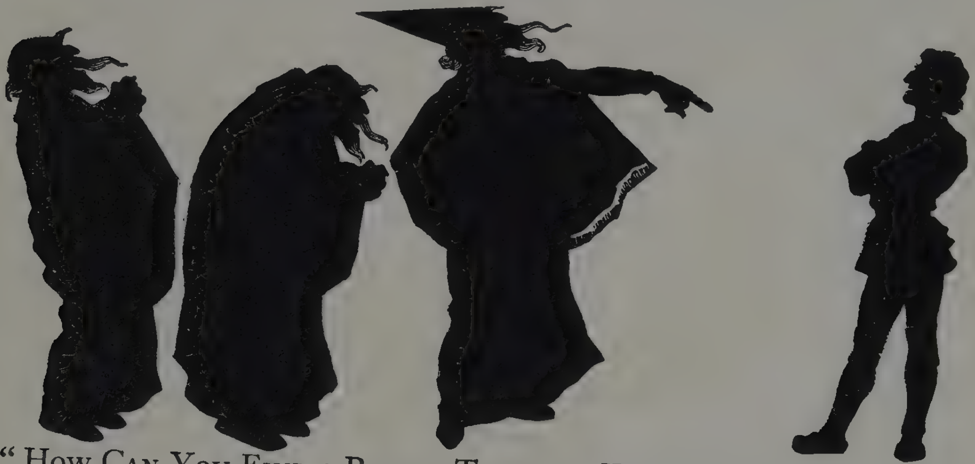


"COME, COME," CALLED THE BARON, GROWING IMPATIENT.

"That's so," mused the Baron; "I hadn't thought of that. Perhaps you would better ask him a question apiece — that would be a fair test."

Then the Three Wise Men took counsel together.

"Now," said the first, "if we succeed in sending this fellow away, the first thing the Baron will ask, after he is gone, will be where to find another and a larger buried treasure — I know these Barons!"



"How Can You Find a Buried Treasure Whenever You Wish?"

"And then — pop! — off will go our heads!" groaned the second.

"Oh, dear, that will never do!" cried the third. "We can't be wise men without our heads! We must ask him how to find a buried treasure."

"What good will that do?" objected the first. "If he *does* tell us, it will be answering our question, so we will all lose our places."

"And if he *doesn't* tell us," continued the second, "we shall keep our places — but we won't know how to find a buried treasure when he is gone."

"Come, come," called the Baron, growing impatient; "hurry up your questions!"

It was Hobson's choice with the wise men. So the first turned to

Hans, and asked: "Can you find a buried treasure whenever you wish?"

"Yes," said Hans.

"How?" asked the wise man.

"Hold on," cried Hans, "you can't have two questions!" And the wise man sat down, biting his lips.

Then the second advanced, and asked: "How can you find a buried treasure whenever you wish?"

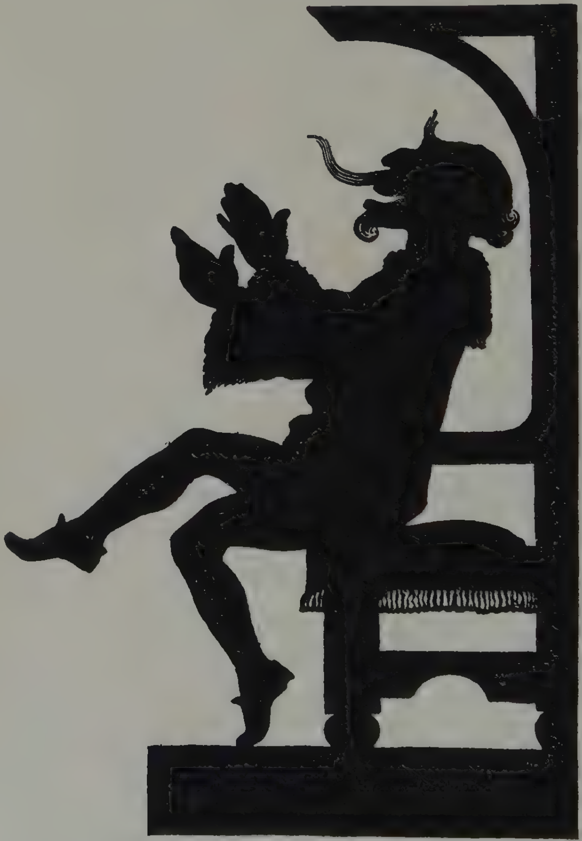
"By not wishing to find one," said Hans, "until I know where one is to be found."

"Oh, dear me!" protested the wise man. "That is no answer!"

"Indeed," said the Baron, "I think it is a very sensible one. It would have saved me lots of disappointment if I had followed that plan at first."

They had just one more chance left. So the three put their heads together to find a question from which there could be no possible escape. And then the third arose, with a look of malicious triumph, and asked:

"How did you know that a treasure was buried under the oak at the cross-roads?"



"GOOD!" SHOUTED THE BARON.

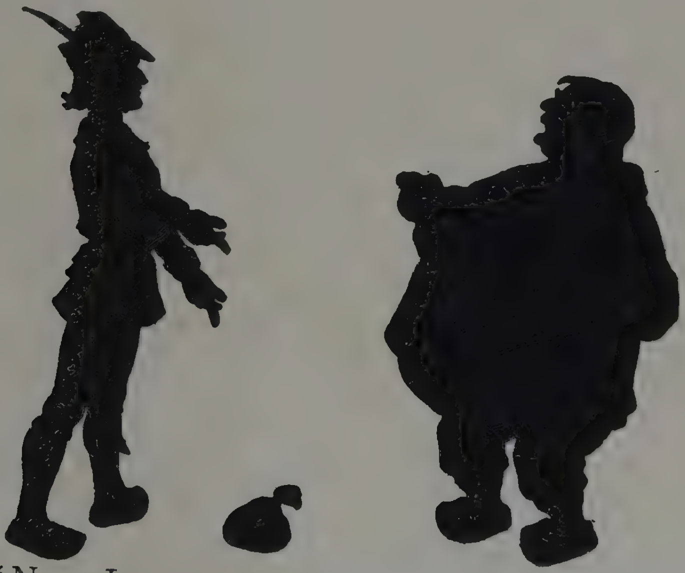
"Why," said Hans, laughing merrily, "I knew that a treasure was buried under the oak because I buried it there myself."

The Baron threw himself back with a roar of laughter, for he dearly relished a joke — when it was on some one else.

"Good!" he shouted. "Good enough! If you want to find a buried treasure, go bury it yourself! Ho, ho, ho! Why, you have outwitted the wits at their own game!" he cried in high glee. "I couldn't have done it any better myself!" — which was a great deal for a Baron to admit. And then said he to Hans: "Whatever you wish, sir, speak, and it shall be yours!"

"Then please let me go back to Narrheit," cried Hans, quickly. "I would rather be a fool in peace than a wise man in peril."

Then the Baron gave Hans a sack of gold, and sent him back to Narrheit in his own coach.



"Now, Johann Barthel," Said Hans, "I Have Come Back to Stay."

"Now, Johann Barthel," said Hans, as he stood in the door, "I have come back to stay."

"But there is no room!" cried Johann.

Hans threw his bag of gold on the floor. "Don't say there is no room," laughed he. "Just make the bench a little longer!"

And that is a saying in Narrheit to this day.

Y^e Olde-Tyme Tayle

Of Ye Knight, Ye Yeo-manne, And Ye Faire Damosel

Canto One

In whych y^e olde-tyme tayle y^s begunne.

Y^e reste of y^e name omytted, y^e tayle goeth on.

ONCE onne a tyme there bin a knighte,
Was called Sir Dominoes
Johannes Houven-Gouven-Schnouvers
San Domingo Mose —
A warrior hee of noble bloode
As e'er founde funne in fyghte.
Oh, when hee putte hys armoure on
Hee was a fearsome sighte!
Bounde rounde with strappes, and strippes, and stryngs,
With thingumbobbes and pegs,

Y^e knight seemeth a junk-shoppe on legs, forsooth!

With stove-liddes buckled on hys breast,
And stove-pypes on hys legs,
An ironne potte upon hys headde,
A brazen horne toe toote,
A sworde stucke uppe hys burlie backe,
A razor downe hys boote.

Hee was wealthie, hee was.

Hee owned greate castles, landes, and menne,
And gallant shyppes, and steedes,
And twice as manie goldenne coinnes
As aniebodie needes.

He carryes hys coales toe New-castle.

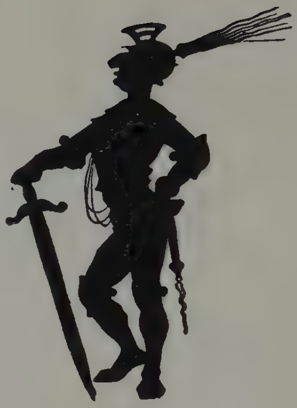
Y^e knighte hee loved a farmer's lass:
Alas! Shee loved notte hym;
But doted on a yeo-manne bolde,
By name Sam-u-el Slimme,
Who ploughed, and sowed, and reaped, and binned,
Who stanchlie tilled y^e dirte,

Sam-u-el's dresse is neate butte notte gaudie.

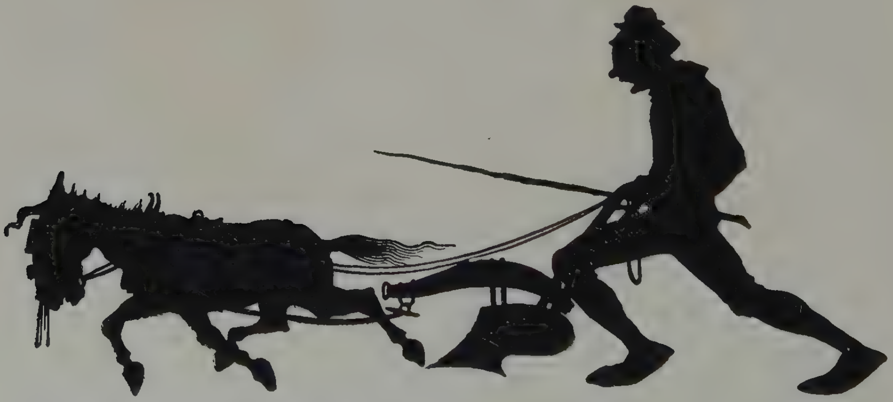
And wore a look of honestie,
Likewise a flannel shirte.
Stronge was hys arme; warme was hys heart;
Colde was hys common-sense;

Hee was noe millionaire, notte hee.

But, otherwise, poore Sam-u-el
Hadde notte a dozen pence.



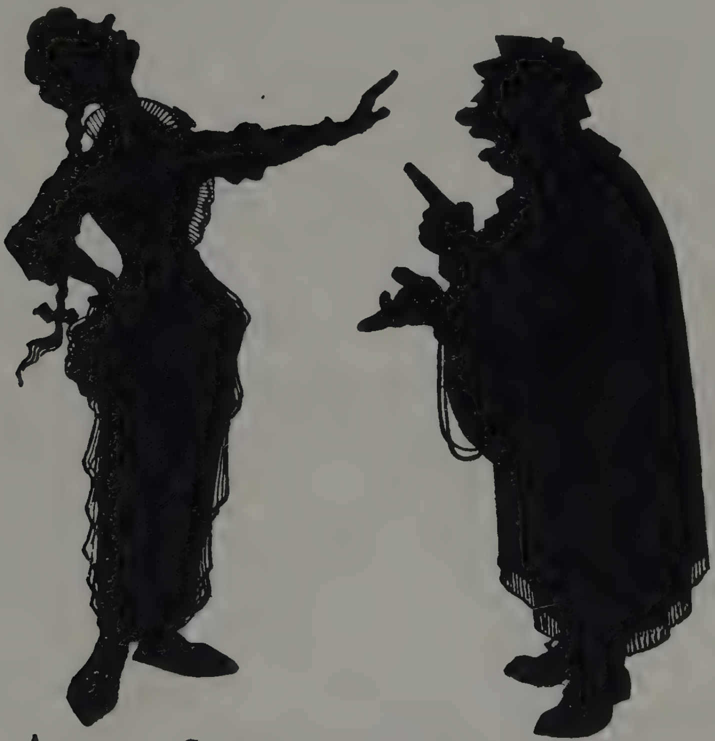
Sir Dominoes.



A Yeomanne Bolde, Who Ploughed and Sowed, and Reaped.

Yet Albacinda scoffed and scorned
Y^e high and haughtie knighte:
She did notte like hys ironne clothes
Nor care to see hym fyghte.
Hys castle was too olde and darke;
She scorned hys golde as welle—
Her father on Sir Mose dyd smyle;
She clung to Sam-u-el.

A wilfulle woman will have her waye.



Albacinda Scoffed and Scorned the Knighte.

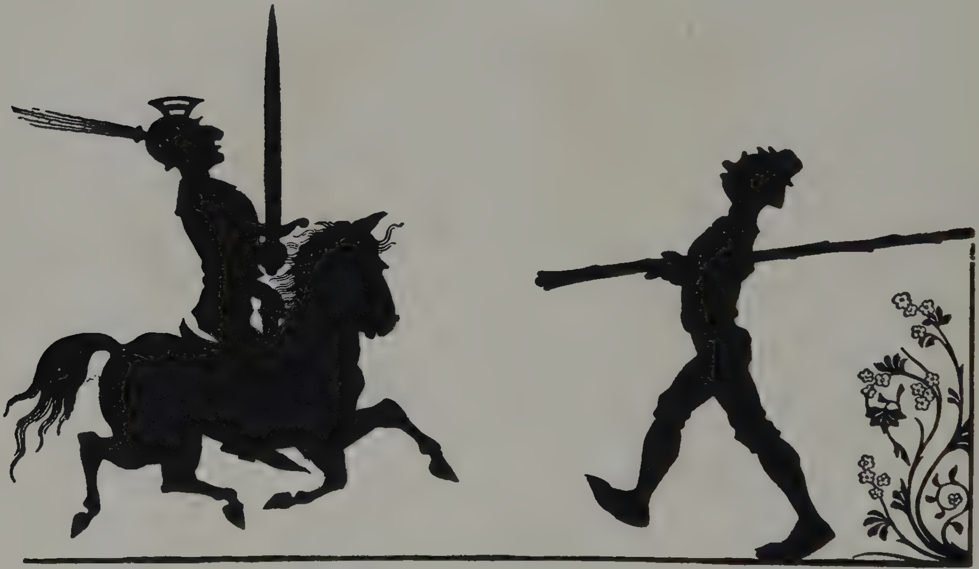
Canto Two

Y^e^ birdes syngen and Sprynge comen in.

One mornynge in y^e monthe of Maye,
Amidst y^e growinge graine,
Y^e rivalle lovers met eftsoon,
A-comynge downe y^e lane.

Y^e^ knighte speaketh pleasauntlie.

"Give waye, vile caitiff!" cryed Sir Mose,
"And lette me journeye on;
Or I will strewe thy fragmentes uppe
And downe y^e horizonne!"



Ye Rivalle Lovers Meet.

Y^e^ dogges of warre are sycked onne.

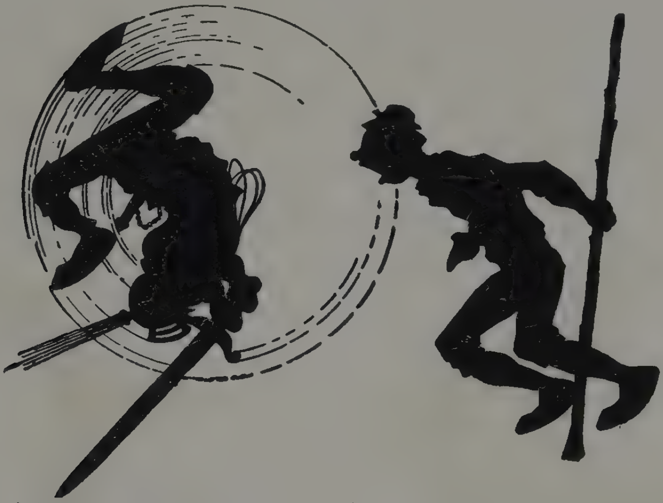
Then bolde Sir Mose hee drewe hys sworde,
Felte once its rustie edge,
And slashed a slash at Sam-u-el
That mowed tenne yardes of hedge.
I' faithe! It was a vicious blowe
And whystled in y^e aire!

Sam-u-el saveth hys baconne.

Butte when it reached brave Sam-u-el,
Sam-u-el was notte there.
So fierce and fearfulle was yᵉ stroke
Sir What's-hys-name arose,

Yᵉ knighte doeth a grande circusse acte.

Turned three successyve summersaults,
And landed on hys nose.



Turned Three Successyve Summersaults.

Hys stove-plates drove hym in yᵉ mudde
Sixe inches by yᵉ falle:

A warnynge 'gainst full-dresse suits.

Yᵉ knighte, soe weightilie got uppe,
Coulde notte gette uppe atte alle.
Sam-u-el dyd notte haste awaye,
For hee hadde cutte a sticke
Four tymes as longe as hys righte arme,
And e'en a'moste as thicke;

A painfulle tailor-ynge — forsooth.

Then, thoughe yᵉ knighte was well dressed uppe,
Yᵉ farmer dressed hym downe;

He mayde y^{e} knighte soe blacke and blue
He was quite done uppe browne.

It pleaseth Sam-u-el toe bee sarcasticalle.

" Y^{e} picked thys bedde," quoth Sam-u-el,
" Methinkes I'll lette thee lie:
Thy lying once wille bee grimme truthe.
Sweet dreams, faire Sir! Goode-by! "
Y^{e} knighte, soe sorelie taken in,
Woulde fain bee taken oute;
" I stycke at thys! " in wrath hee cryed,

Y^{e} knighte howleth

And loude for helpe dyd shoute.
And eke hee sware a mightie vow,

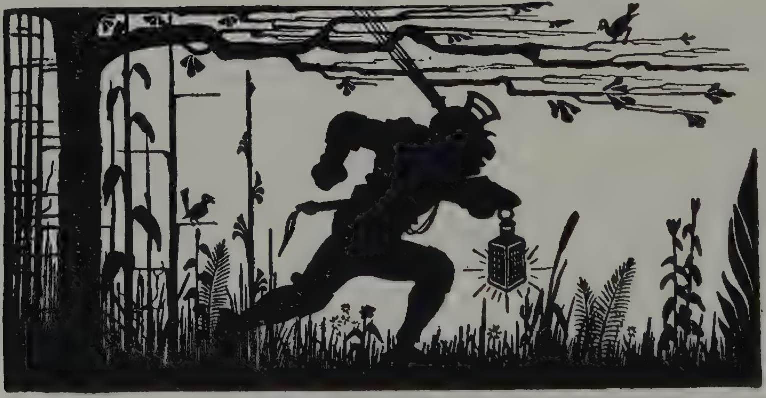
And threateneth paine toe Sam-u-el.

" Great fishynge-hookes! Y' bette,
By my beste Sunday garter-stryngs,
I'll beate y^{e} plough-manne yette! "

Hys haire it stoode strayghte uppe for rage;
Hys lippes were whyte with foame;

Perchance a bonfyre later.

Hee sware toe goe that nighte and burne
Sam-u-el's humble home.

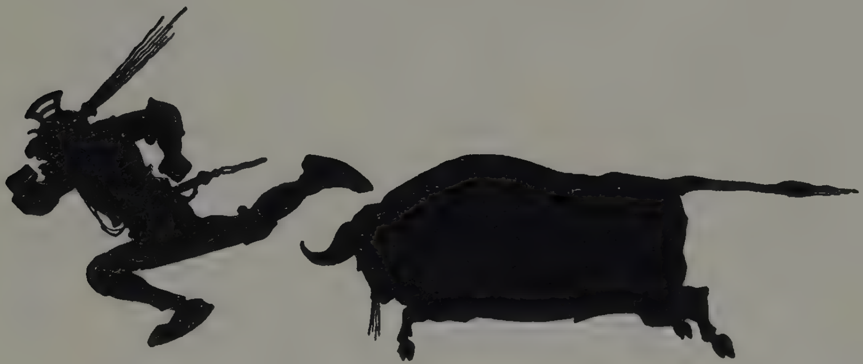


As Hee Stole Alonge.

Canto Three

Being yᵉ night-tyme when honeste folke are safe abedde.

Above yᵉ deepe and danksome delle
Beneathe yᵉ gloomye woode,
Yᵉ wynde it howled a dismalle straine;
Yᵉ knighte hee howled for bloode;
But as hee stole alonge, a bulle
Espied yᵉ lanterne dimme,



Ye Bulle It Hunted Hym!

It groweth interestynge for Sir Mose.

Yᵉ knighte moveth hys bootes.

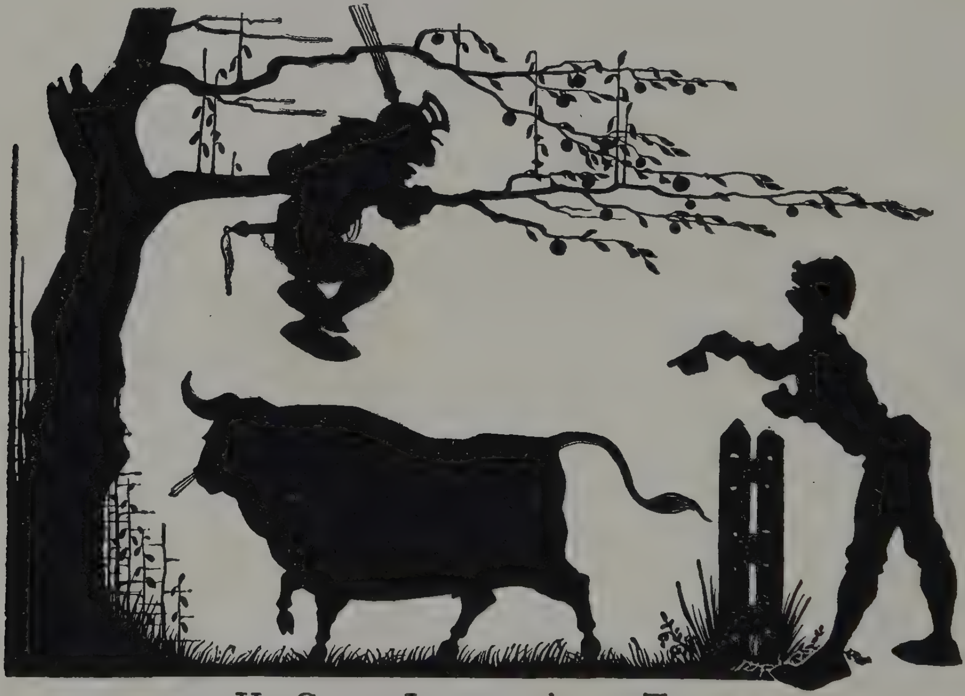
And whyles hee hunted Sam-u-el
Yᵉ bulle it hunted hym!
When it flewe in, yᵉ lighte flewe oute;
Yᵉ knighte flewe, with a crye;
Hys coat-tayles they flewe oute beehynde;
Hys legges how they dyd flye!
Yᵉ stove-pypes flewe; yᵉ stove-liddes too;
Hys weaponnes wente toe potte;
Sir Mose arose upon hys toes:
Hee juste gotte uppe and gotte!

He hath a pressynge engagemente elsewheres.

With those greate hornes, three cloth-yardes longe,
A whystlynge in yᵉ wynde,
Soe on yᵉ knighte spedde, like some curre

With a tinne canne beehynde.
For e'en a'moste twoe myles hee fledde;
Nigh tuckered oute was hee,
When oute of danger's waye he clomb,
Into an apple-tree,
Whereon hee hunge a-shiverynge
And shriekynge atte y^e^ beaste,

Hee taketh "Excelsior" for hys mottoe, and clymbeth upward.



He Clomb Into an Apple Tree.

Till Sam-u-el came oute toe worke,
When daye dawned in y^e^ easte.
Forsoothe, Sam-u-el's rage waxed hotte;
Then loude hee 'gan toe laughe:
"Toe judge by thy companion, Sir,
Thou art a bawlynge calfe —

Introducynge Sam-u-el and hys ironnie again.

For menne are knowne, I trow, Sir, by
Yᵉ companie they keepe —
Thoughe onlie chickens rooste in trees
Whyles honeste people sleepe!"

Yᵉ knighte meeteth with a fearsome mishappe, and flyeth high.

Sir Mose yelled fiercelie; butte, quite weake
From hangyng alle yᵉ nighte,
Hee felle upon yᵉ bulle, which tossed
Hym clean uppe oute of syghte!

Canto Four

"Huddup!" cryeth Sam-u-el.

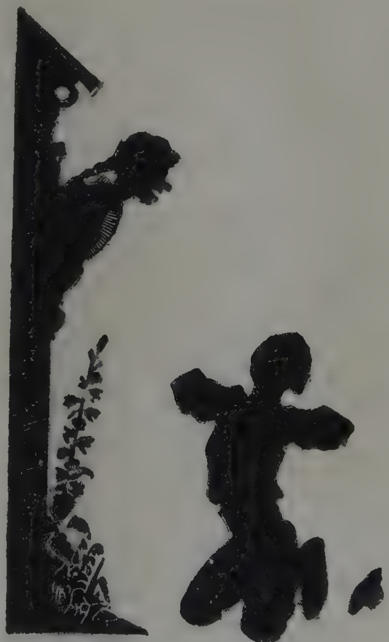
Then uppe gat bolde younge Sam-u-el
And galloped downe yᵉ lane
Unto hys true-love's windowe-ledge,
And tapped upon yᵉ pane:

Wherein Sam-u-el wooeth boldlie.

"Come forthe, sweete-hearte; my love thou art!
Come forthe and hie awaye!
Thou'lt married bee, deare girle, toe mee
Before highe noone thys daye.
Sweet Albacinda, flye with mee,
And rule these vaste concernes,
Helde safe in truste for bold Sir Mose!

Thys is a joke.

(If ever hee returnes!)"



"COME FORTHE, SWEETE-HEARTE."

They proceede toe flye.

Now gallop, gallop, gallant horse!
Now gallop with thy prize!
And hurle y^e claye in chunkes awaye
As bigge as apple-pies!

Maud S., please take notyce hereabouts!

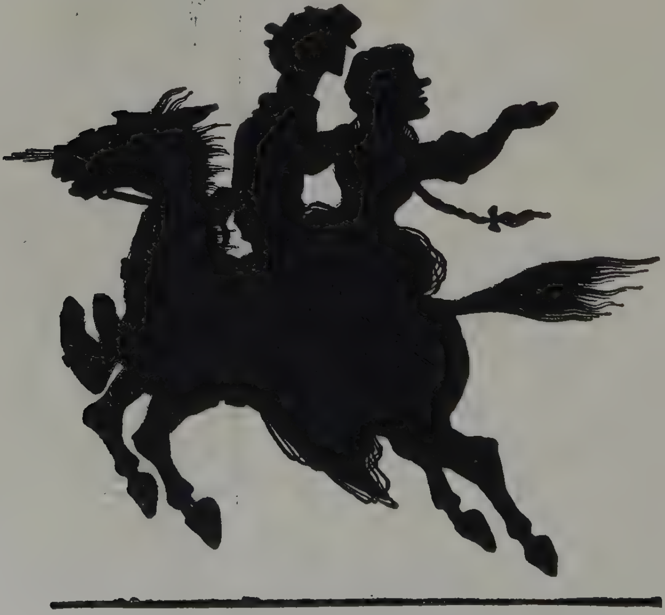
Flye downe y^e roade, arounde y^e hille,
Uppe toe y^e castle doore;
Across y^e tremblynge drawbrydge flye
Uppe toe y^e banquette floore;

Y^e friar cometh forth.

Quicke, calle y^e gray-haired friar in
From oute hys gloomie celle,
Toe tie these twoe younge true-loves tighte!
Ringe oute, y^e marriage bell!

Y^e bells turne some summersaultes.

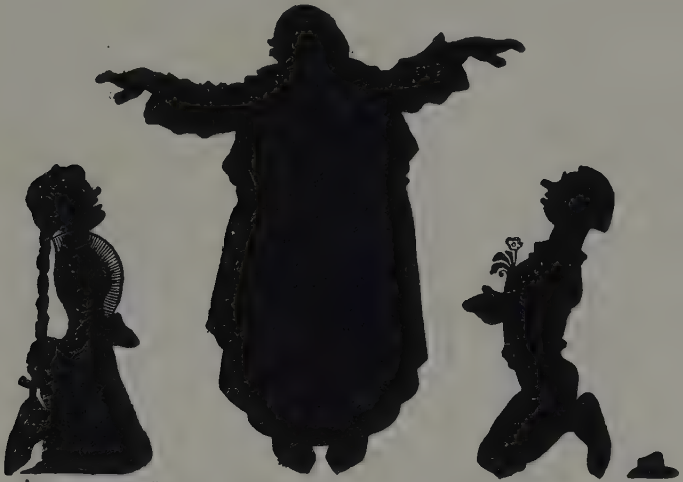
Ryng "jingle-jangle jangle-jing!"
Ryng "fol-de-riddle-laye!"
Bolde Sam-u-el has wone hys bryde
For ever and a daye!



Now Gallop, Gallop, Gallant Horse!

—If hee knoweth upon whych side hys breade is buttered.

Goe, bidde yᵉ foolishe father
Toe forgette hys angrie pride,
Accepte hys new-made son-in-lawe,
And blesse yᵉ bonnie bryde.



ACCEPTE HYS NEW-MADE SON-IN-LAWE, AND BLESSE YE BONNIE BRYDE.

The Merry Pieman and the Don's Daughter

I

MANY years ago, upon the banks of a silvery river, which rippled through the dreary heart of old Scandalusia, there stood an enormous castle with many broken towers, in which dwelt a haughty Don and his only daughter, Francella.

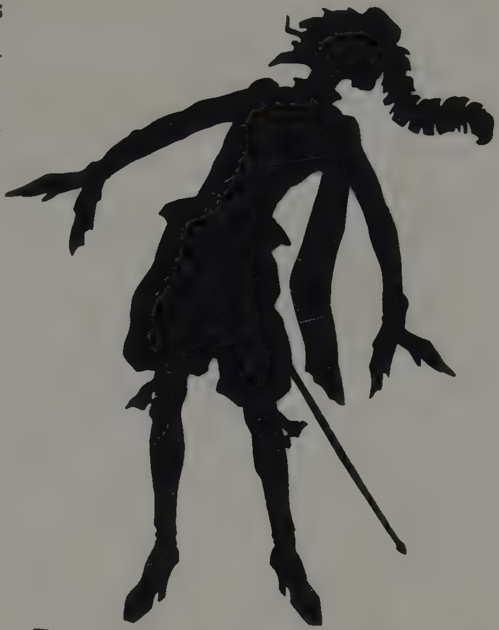
Don Sancho Pancho Pedro Pablo de Angostura had a nose like an eagle's beak, and an eye like a red lantern. He was very fierce and proud. The blood of eleven generations of noble ancestors throbbed in his veins, and there were forty-seven quarterings upon his coat-of-arms. But he had not three maravedi.

His daughter, Francella, was indeed a lovely girl, with eyes like those of the wild deer which peeped at dawn from the edges of the cork-wood along the margin of the shining river.

She was in truth as fair as a wild spring flower; and so wildly enamoured of her transcendent loveliness were all the bachelors in Scandalusia that they one and all had forsaken their more or less uncomfortable haciendas, gave up napping after dinner, and wandered about the country doing all sorts of futile and ridiculous things in hopes of gaining her favor.

Now in previous generations it is said that the heads of ogres, dragons, necromancers, sorcerers, sorceresses, astrologers, wizards and giants that were slain in combat by knights-errant in a good season, when packed in two-horse wagons to be sent home, were almost a week in passing any given point.

But, if this were true, they must have secured some conveyance from Grenada, for there were not, at that time, so many wagons in all Castile, let alone the single province of Scandalusia.



Don Sancho Pancho Pedro Pablo de Angostura.

But times were now grown pretty hard for the knight-errantry and nobility: there had come a lull; and with that lull, adversity.

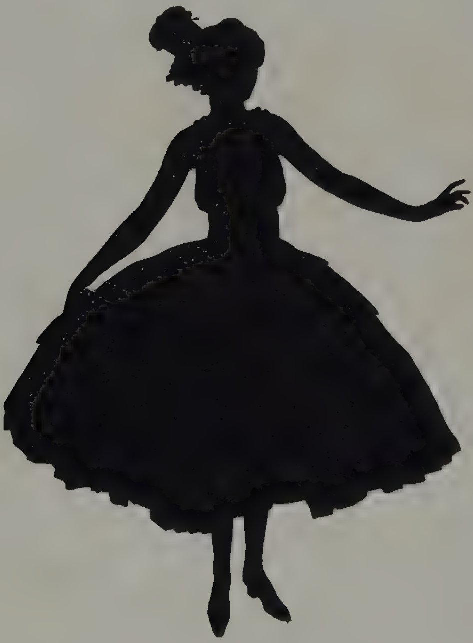
There had not been a dragon killed for nobody knew how long. And but few giants, and they were cheap ones, had offered opportunity for winning a rich reward.

So that chivalry, as sometimes unfortunately happens with the very best of chivalries, had been greatly reduced in substance.

Some sort of blight had got among the dragons. They had withered away, turned sickly in color, and shrunken to shameful dimensions. Few now spat fire, or breathed noxious vapors or smoke; and so timid and rickety were those which remained that a good knight was ashamed to attack such as yet lurked in remote townships.

Some had even become village pets; and such as still exhibited untameable dispositions were so depleted in ferocity and strength that village constables and police had without much difficulty, taken them in charge; some were in jails, some in reformatories, and some in public gardens where children out with their nurses fed them buns.

This devastating murrain or plague was supposed to be some sort of foot-and-mouth disease; for they neither clawed well, nor bit thoroughly. This was, to be sure, but supposition; veterinary for dragons was at a low ebb. The older dragons had unfortunately taken so devouring an interest in veterinaries that few remained actively practising.



Francella, the Don's Daughter.

Some dragons had fallen victims to farcy and epozootic; and roaring among dragons had become an unenviable infirmity of the great beasts and not an accomplishment.

Giantude was in no better state. By living in caves, in damp and sunless gloom, and in unsanitary towers totally devoid of plumbing, by neglect of the few simple laws of hygiene, giants had so decreased in stature, brawn, and blood-thirstiness that rewards for their vanquishment or extermination had decreased to quite nothing at all, and were not worth a body's while.

Now and then, it is true, in reply to advertisements of Lost, Strayed, or Stolen, promising commensurate reward and no questions asked, some vigorous and impatient knight had secured a good giant and a reasonable reward for his vanquishment; but the halcyon days of giant-killing were gone; the last good giant had gone into Bohemia with a circus, where he sang in the concert, and lifted weights.

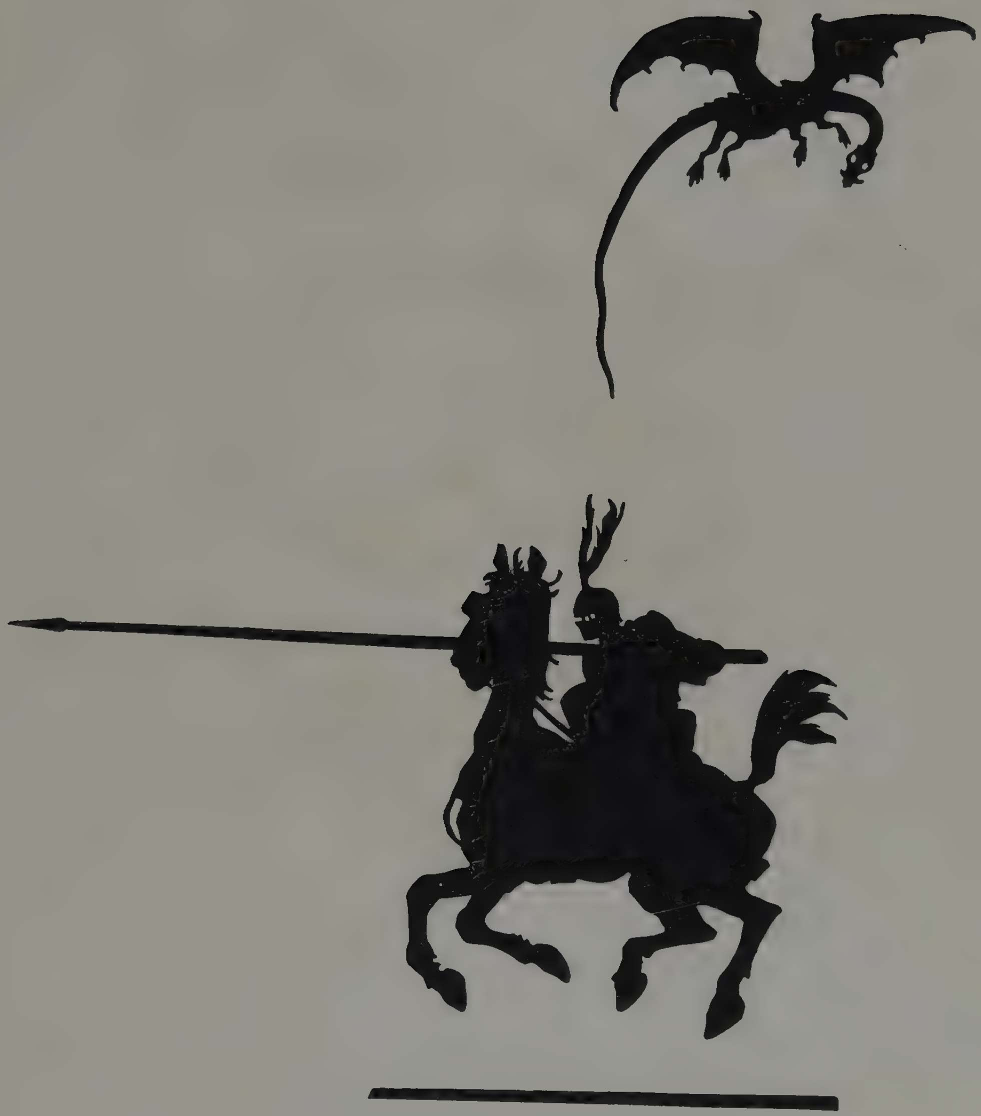
As a dependable source of knightly revenue gigantic war had petered out.

Hard times had come upon the knight-errantry and nobles of old Scandalusia; they knew both want and hunger; many of the very first families were brought to penury; and almost all knew the disheartening grind of destitution and the dolorous pinch of hunger.

VETERINARY FOR DRAGONS.

Cupboards empty as Mother Hubbard's were to be found in many of the best castles; kitchens were bare, pantries painfully poor. Feasts had fallen quite away, to the poignant regret of the nobles of Scandalusia: for the nobles of Scandalusia were fond of feasting, and addicted to the delicate craft of great gormandizing, an art not honored in the breach, but in its observance.

In short, the best people in the province were hungry, and feeling almost as blue as their blood.



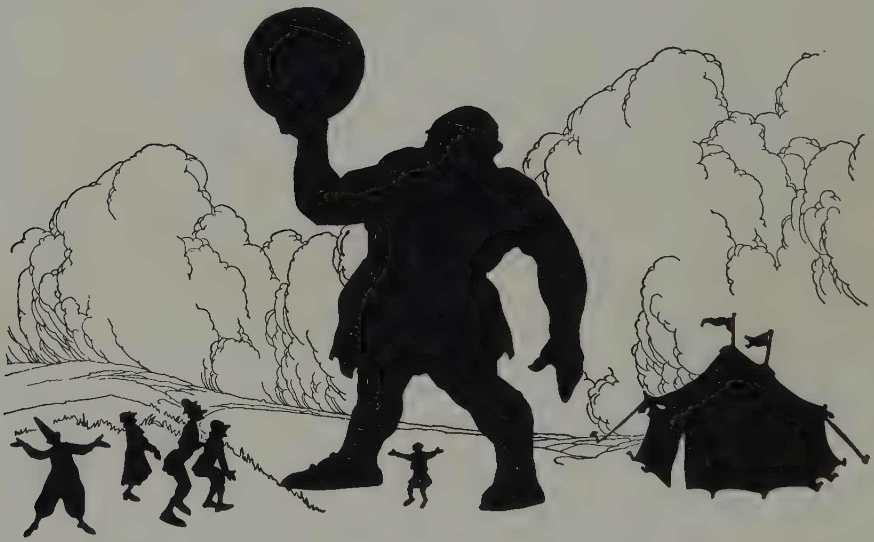
IN THE GOOD OLD DRAGON DAYS.

II

Don Sancho Pancho Pedro Pablo de Angostura was an old time hidalgo, narrow, violent, arbitrary, arrogant, unscrupulous; but a remarkable cork-and-bottle man.

He had not escaped the pinch of penury.

He had retired from court some years before, hoping to pass the remainder of his days in the prosperous and peaceful preoccupation of a cork-and-bottle business.



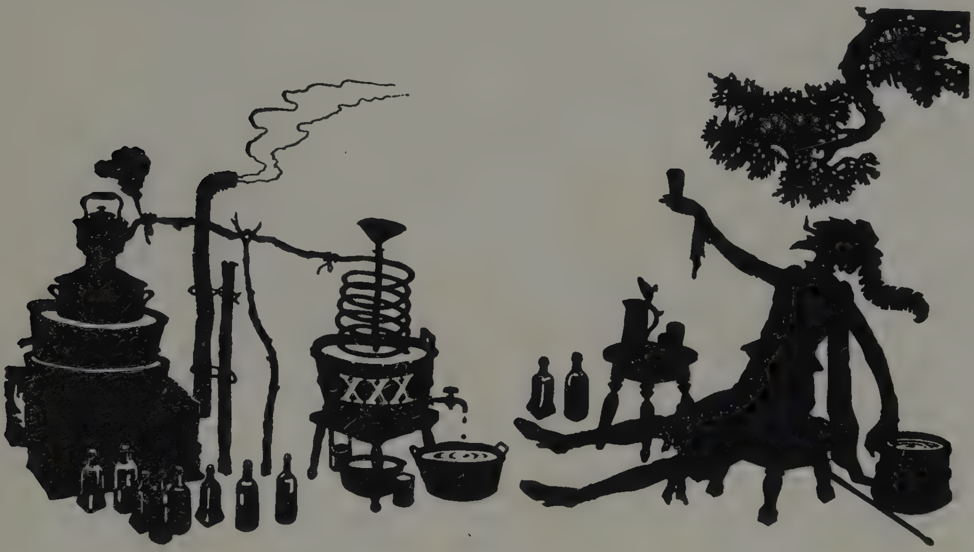
The Last Good Giant Had Gone Into Bohemia, with a Circus, Where He Lifted Weights.

The chiefest portion of his income arose from a bottling-works.

These works purveyed to an appreciative public the pungent bitters his name had made famous. The bitters were made in boilers; he got his corks from the cork-woods by the river where the deer ran to and fro, adding a touch of romance to an otherwise, at times, rather tawdry business of bottling bitters.

But the bitters-bottling business had fallen away since the decline of dragon-killing had made rigid economy absolutely necessary to the preservation of appearances among the best families.

Through the pinch of poverty Scandalusia's best-born people had grown parsimonious, peevish, and penurious. It irked Don Pedro to see his equals fall so low as to use the same bottles over and over, and the same corks twice.



THE DON'S BOTTLING WORKS.

And now they had stopped drinking bitters, and had taken to imbibing beer . . . small-beer, barrelled and bunged, not bottled and corked.

The cost of rearing and maintaining a beautiful daughter in old Scandalusia was something enormous; it was almost prohibitive, wax for making flowers at three-pence the sheet, colored, two-pence, plain, and the price of thread-lace rising daily. The redoubled expense of proper tuition, in harping, embroidery, dancing, graceful postures and genuflections, drew heavily on the Don's depleted fortunes. Poor but proud relatives would do for duennas; but as to keeping abreast of Scandalusia's freshest fashions . . . ff-ff-ff — ! Don Pedro sucked his lower lip.

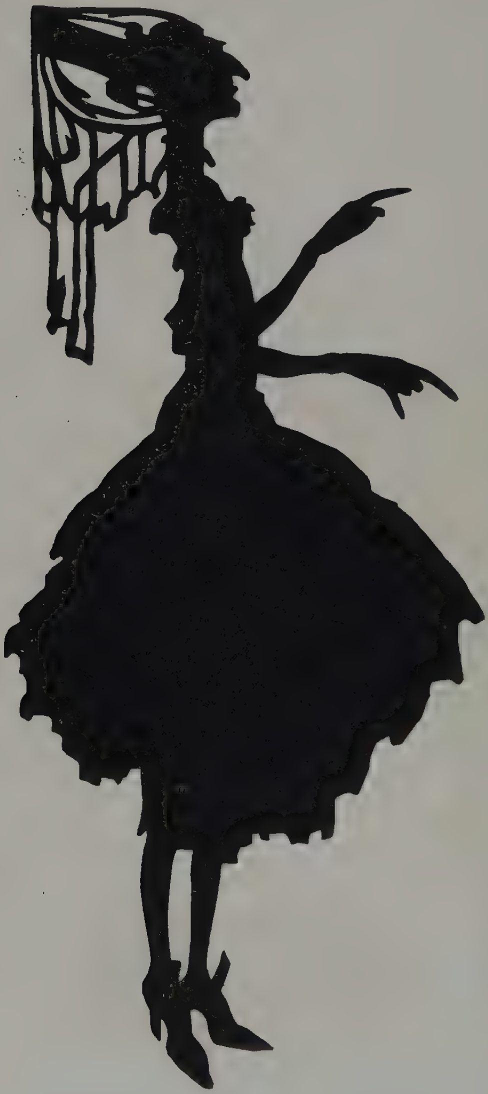
The years were running by; he had no sons to succeed to the shoes of his eminence, or to take over the bottling business.

The haughty Don bent his proud head upon his humiliated hands, and pondered on the parlous state of the cork-and-bottle trade.

"Alas! Alas!" he sighed. "Nothing can retrieve the fallen fortunes of the proud house of Angostura but an advantageous marriage for Francella!"

But Francella did not wish to make an advantageous marriage.

Francella had for some time been deeply in love with a young pastry-vendor, whom she had seen peddling pies in the market-place, one morning, clad in a blue-and-yellow jacket, and singing like a lark. His name was Pedro Perez; but everyone called him The Merry Pieman.

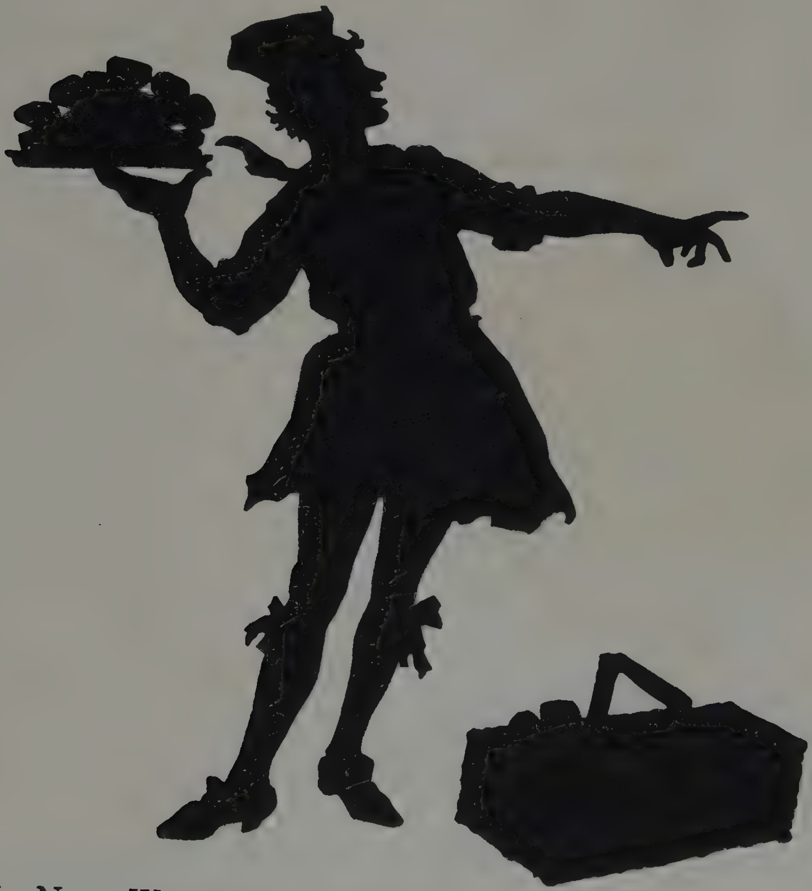


Poor But Proud Relatives Would Do for Duennas.

III

Now Pedro Perez was not a poor but honest pieman. His integrity was above suspicion; the meat in his tarts was always much in excess of the crust; one bit, and at each bite the delectable fruits gushed out upon all sides and trickled down one's fingers . . . his custards were felicitously compounded of superior sweets, of most delicious flavors and most delicate texture. The consistency of his wares only equalled that of his character. As a pieman he was really a genius.

It is true he had no patent of nobility; but he had a patent on a

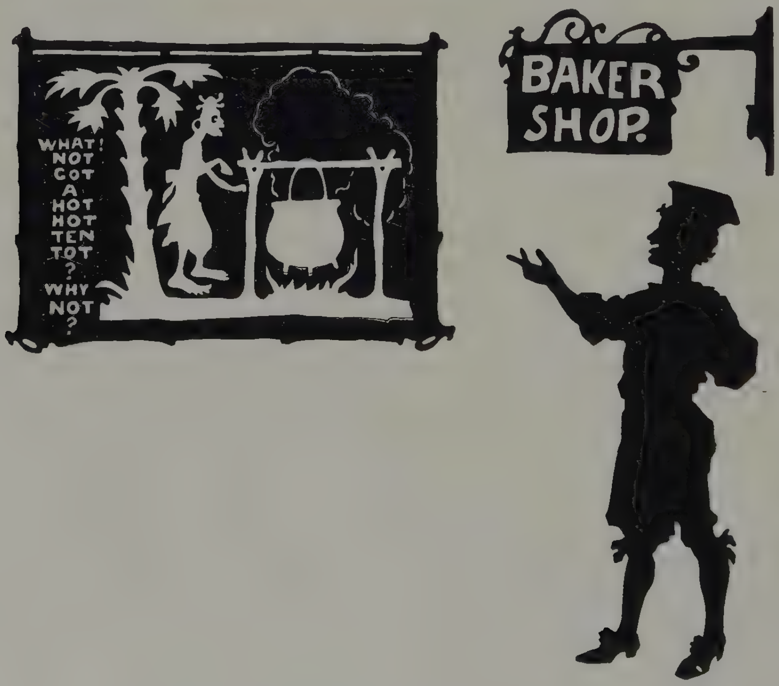


His Name Was Pedro Perez, but Every One Called Him The Merry Pieman.

pie, known as *The Hot Hottentot,* a turnover of so grand a composition and so exquisite a taste that it had given a new gusto to a tired world, to youth a new delight, refreshed the jaded, transported the gourmand, enraptured the epicures; and from a small investment had brought back immense returns.

Pedro had no family tree beyond the bigness of a pepper-bush; but he possessed the genius of high finance, demand and supply. He bought large stocks of fruits, spices, condiments and flours when crops were large and prices low, and sold pies when the world was hungry; his profits hence were great.

He had carefully studied the ratio of returns, the theory of cause and effect, and the inexorable laws of supply and demand, through the


WHAT! NOT GOT A HOT HOT TEN TOT ? WHY NOT ?
BAKER SHOP.

He Had a Patent on a Pie, Known as "The Hot Hottentot."

invariable operation of which victuallers flourish and pie-bakers grow rich . . . upon general hunger.

His business was based upon life's eternal and unremitting urge: men may drink because they like to; but THE WORLD MUST EAT to live.

Thus the bitters-bottling business hung upon an intermittent and temperamental thirst; pie-baking was based upon the great and immutable law of HUNGER, constantly recurring, perennial, universal, eternal, everlasting as the Scandalusian mountains which stood unchanged against the sky.

Being born poor, he had early acquired the habit of thrift: he had no dissolute, charming friends to borrow his means or to dissipate his profits.

He had long ago learned how to use little means to great advantage, and to make outlay generous without extravagance, which the nobility had never learned, and your aristocrat disdained.

Illustrious knights had gone on dragonnades, and fed the dragons; but Pedro Perez, the Pieman, had fed the WORLD.

"It matters little in the long run whether men spring from dons or donkeys!" said his grandfather, as he sprang from the back of gray Jenny. And though for him no sounding titles were engrossed upon many distinguished rolls, the name of PEDRO PEREZ, the PIEMAN, was stamped, literally, upon millions of buns, sugar-biscuit, tarts and turnovers, to say nothing of wigs and apple-stickies.

Like his own fine wheat-bread he was well-made, fine-grade, quick-rising, and had a delicious crust.

In the consummate art of baking it was impossible not to recognize in Pedro Perez that rarest of rare things in this world: he was a gustatory connoisseur, a real distinction where common folk only guzzle and gobble.

The small vulgarities of his conduct, such as singing in the street, dancing down the lanes, and tossing tarts into ladies' windows, arising as they did from an impetuous heart, though perhaps inexcusable in the Don's social circle, were readily forgiven by the young heart of love, and easily pardoned in the bakers' set in which young Perez moved.

Francella was supremely happy in her whole-hearted adoration of this pleasing, prosperous, and pulchritudinous young pieman.

IV

YET, to a maiden who loved as passionately and whole-heartedly as Francella, there was little satisfaction in peeping through the lattice of her window, at daybreak every morning, as she did, merely to see the pieman passing by with his basket, twirling his pastry paddle, and humming a tune. Still even that little glimpse filled her dreams the whole day long, just as one sees green and scarlet everywhere after looking at the sun.

One morning, as Pedro passed with his basket of tarts, whistling the scrap of a bolero, he chanced to look up, and spied Francella peeping from her window.

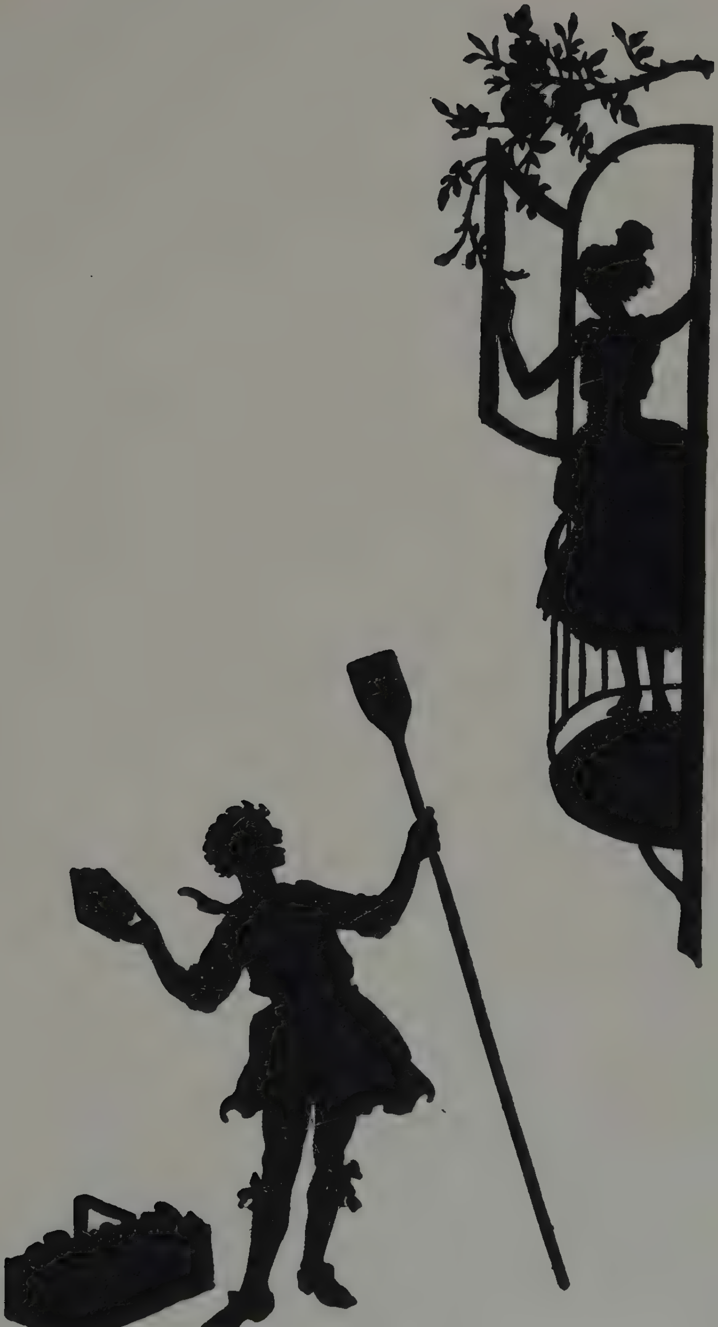
The moment he saw her he paused, and his whistle ran off in a squeak. The blood leaped in Francella's lovely cheeks, and she was about to draw the curtain, when he doffed his cap with a graceful bow, smiling merrily as he did so, and, choosing the crispest custard pastry in his basket, one compounded of superior sweets, of delectable taste, and seraphic odor, he tossed it up toward her window.

"Oh!" gasped Francella. "It will spill!"

But the delicate and fragile pasty sailed through the air like a swallow on the wing, turned over twice, and fell upon the window-seat unharmed, with a deliciously appetizing plop!

"See, O beautiful senorita mia," said the young pieman, "It is at once tart and turnover!"

Francella clasped her hands in rapture, speechless with delight. The young pastry-vendor thought he never had looked upon a lovelier picture.



"Beautiful, beautiful senorita!" he exclaimed, pressing his hand to his heart,

"You are the cake of my endeavour, and my jelly-roll forever;
My tapioca-tartlet, my lemon-custard pie;
You're my candied fruit and spices, my juicy citron slices;
You're the darling, sugar-sprinkled apple-dumpling of my eye!"

Simple songs like this, in Spanish, are made beautiful by the language.

Francella's heart fluttered. "Truly," she said, as she set her small white teeth deep into the rim of the alluring pasty with a rapturous crackle of its rich crust, "truly you are the most delightful lover that I have ever had. But tell me," she asked tremulously, "tell me, pray; is this a lemon-custard pasty?"

"Yes, yes. It is lemon-custard."

"Oh! I dote on lemon-custard!"

At that moment heavy footsteps, hurrying up the hollow stair, echoed along the corridor. Francella turned pale. "Fly!" she cried. "It is my father! The fragrance of the pasty has betrayed us!"

An instant she stood, swaying like a lily in the wind, as the fluttering sash and apron of the pieman faded swiftly from view: she could not restrain a sob as strawberry turnovers, blackberry pies, cinnamon cookies and damson tarts fell, here and there, along the street, and broke into fragments upon the stones.

"Open the door, Francella!" cried her father, in a terrible voice, beating upon the oaken panels. And a terrible voice, in Spanish, is terrible indeed!

"Yes, father," faltered Francella, hastily finishing the pasty, though her hands shook with fright.

"Don't say 'yes,'" roared the angry Don, "but open the door — I smell pastry!"

"A pieman is passing," she stammered.

"Girl," thundered the Don, "do not try to deceive me. I tell you I smell pastry, vulgar, hand-made, custard pastry, through the keyhole of the door!" He had his nose at the keyhole, sniffing loudly.

White with fear Francella drew back the bolt. The Don strode into the room.

There, on the window-ledge, lay three white crumbs.

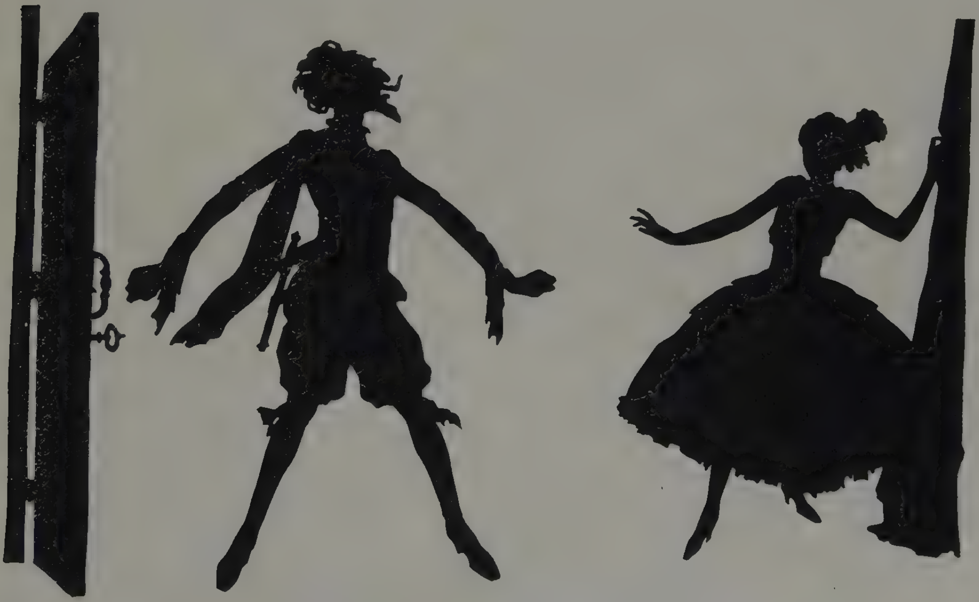
"Francella," cried her father, in a voice so icy cold that she shivered. "Is it possible that you, an Angostura of Scandalusia, have so far forgotten your rank as to eat a common custard pie?"

Francella clung, speechless, to the curtain.

"A daughter of mine should die before she would stoop to the pie of a low-born pastry-vendor!"

"But, father," panted Francella, "I love him."

"What?" roared the Don. "A pie-peddler?" And without another word he locked her up in a dungeon: never should a daughter of the Angosturas stoop to a base alliance.



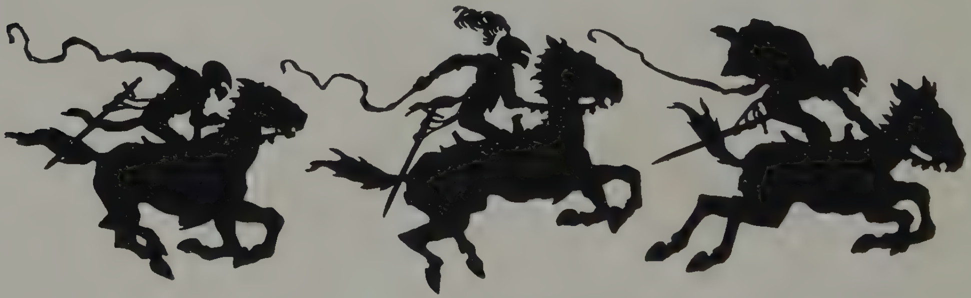
THE DON STRODE INTO THE ROOM.

Then, in a towering rage, he sent out heralds through all the land, to proclaim in every patio, market-place and plaza, that on the following Monday week he would hold a tournament at his castle, open to all high-born caballeros; and to the victor in the combat would give his only daughter, the lovely Francella, lily of Castile, with the one-half of his vast estate with such and whatever mortgages and encumbrances as might thereto be attached, and to all participants in the tourney, a magnificent, a kingly feast.

V

When Don Pedro's proclamation reached the peaks of old Castile a thousand needy knights and hungry esquires pulled their slack belts two-three holes tighter around their shrunker peripheries, mounted their horses, and came posting in from every quarter.

The country roads were clouded with the dust of many horsemen; the highways thundered with hoofs.



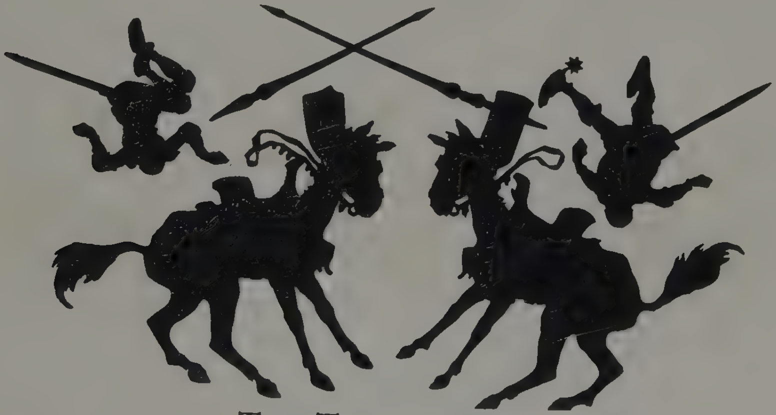
The Highways Thundered With Hoofs.

There had not been such an outpouring of chivalry in Scandalusia since the days of the great crusade.

From east, from west, from north and south they came; from the mountain passes of Pastille, from the cross-roads of Panada, from the furthest limits of Caviare . . . knights and esquires, dukes, hidalgos, nobles, and princes of the royal line, pinched about the middle, but gay, with pennoned lances, plumed helms, and splendid trappings a little moth-eaten, until the highways looked like one grand, endless circus procession of sun-bright chariots, horses and riders, resplendent in the glory of the midsummer noon.

When the great day dawned, the plain about the castle of the Don was hidden by a vast multitude of tents, marquees and pavilions, of radiant colors, over which flapped and swung the banners of the best bloods of Scandalusia.

Then a trumpet blared from the castle-wall; down clanged the drawbridge; the haughty Don rode forth, his retinue about him. At his right hand rode Francella, ashy pale, clad in white samite, and mounted on a cream-white palfrey. A cheer of greeting rolled across the plain and thundered away into the canyons of the mountains, scaring the sheep on the hills almost out of their wool; but Francella drooped, and hung her head upon her breast unmindful of it all.



THE TOURNAMENT.

Up the glittering lists rode the Don to the bar of the high pavilion.

"Begin!" he cried. "The general mêlée!" and waved his hand.

With a tremendous shout, the mail-clad warriors hurtled together like wild boars. Crash! went ashen spears, splintering into fragments that kept the poor in kindlings for a month. Kling! Klang! rang sword and battle-axe on helmet, mail, and shield. Down went horse and rider in clouds of blinding dust. Round and round the arena went the seething whirl, battling like tigers, while from the high pavilion shout and cry from friend and foe arose until the very welkin rang. Scandalusia's is a wonderful welkin, echoing and redoubling every faintest sound of war until heaven and earth together seem met in deadly strife.

Many an unintentional somersault was turned in that wild onfall; and many a gallant knight was tumbled incontinent over his horse's crupper like an apple from a tree.

Yet still the fight raged on with unabated fury, all day long, without even an intermission for refreshments; though, to be sure, here and there, at intervals, from under the mad medley of hilts and heels, some dishevelled caballero crept away on his hands and knees and cried for an ambulance.

But when at last the slow night drew down over the mountains of Scandalusia, the Don arose.

"Hold! Enough!" he cried. "The day is spent. Let us eat, drink, and be merry, and sleep anon; and on the morrow the tourney may proceed."

Then followed a scene which baffled description.

The Don had heavily mortgaged his whole estate to provide that feast.

"Get me the best cook in all Castile!" he said.

"He shall be gotten," bowed the steward.

"And the richest stores of viands in all the land!"

"They shall be procured."

But Don Pedro Pablo de Angostura had not three maravedi.

With no prospect of repayment no caterer in the province would undertake to purvey provision for that feast, he found to his dismay. Until at last he discovered a strange new caterer who undertook, for a ruinous lien on the Don's estate, to purvey a royal banquet.

Handing the Don a quill, "Sign on the dotted line!" he said. Don

Pedro sighed a gusty sigh, but, reflecting, signed, moving his haughty head up and down and to and fro with the motion of the pen; this was, at that time, the height of fashion among Scandalusian nobles.

VI

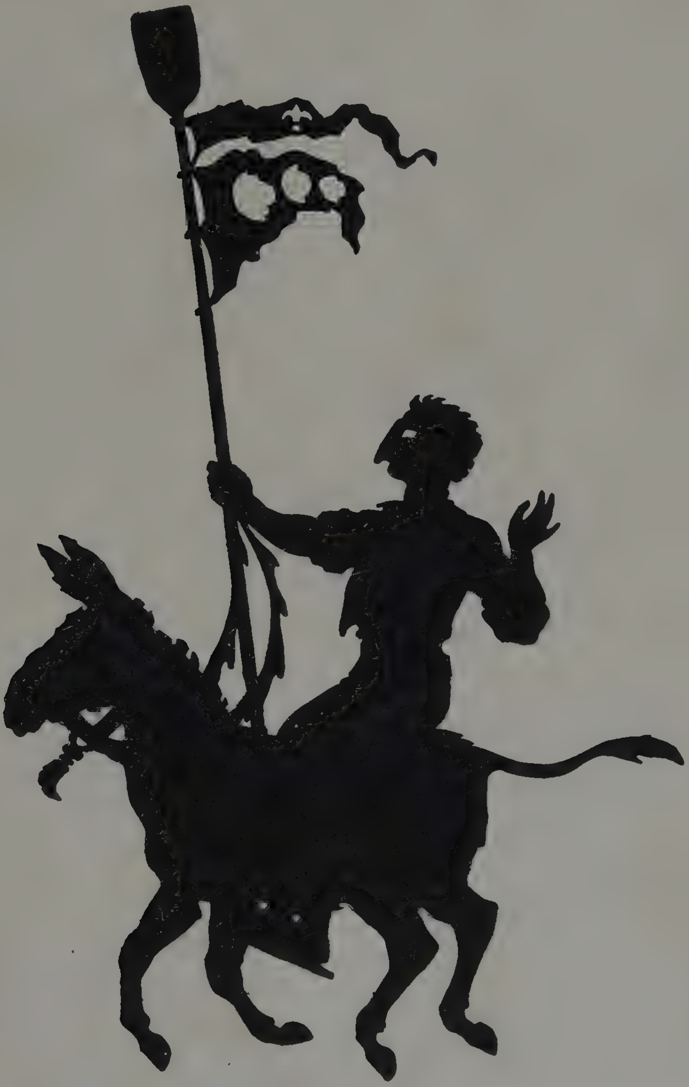
THERE on the great tables, spread on the long pavilion, steamed and glowed a feast which filled the air for miles with an appetizing fragrance that was in itself almost a meal. It made the mouths of those hungry warriors water like mountain springs.

Roasted capon, stuffed with spice and olives; fliches of beef, garnished with savory and lined with currant jelly; broad gammons of sizzling bacon, crisped, with onions and grated almonds; fat eels, stewed in rich, green oil; sausages, buried in golden cheese-cakes; roast lamb with clear mint sauce; sturgeon stuffed with sweet-breads; venison collops with currant jam; turbot, herring, sturgeon roe, turtle-soup, and devilled kidneys drowned in wine.

Forks were unknown in those days; so that the guests were speedily gravied, oiled, and spiced to their elbows, and the table-cloth was a sight.

Then came figs, raisins, dates, honeyed prunes and apricots, candied cherries, plum preserves, pickled peaches, brandied pineapple, jams, jellies and conserves, swimming in lakes of yellow cream, and snowed under with sparkling sugar grains. After these, ripe melons, grapes, oranges, and luscious pears were served, with fruit-cake, and cocoa-

nut patties mellowed with great lumps of golden butter as big as the miller's thumb. And between the courses, huge trays of confectionery were carried round, and each guest helped himself with a sugar-

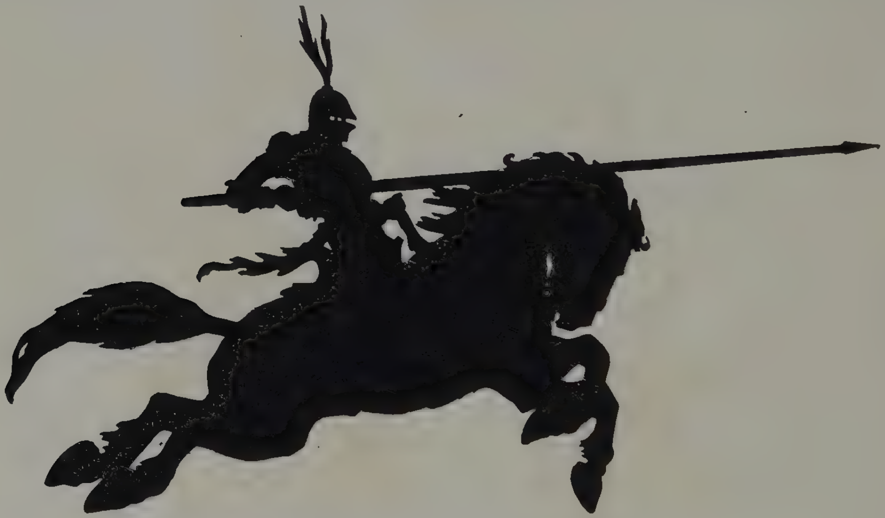


A Solitary Caballero.

scoop. At every plate was a bag almost bursting with Barcelona nuts; and from first to last, the famous wine of Old Torpedo ran in streams.

When at last the banquet came to an end, and all of the guests had been assisted home in wheelbarrows, being quite unable to walk alone, silence fell upon the scene.

But in the night, within the camp, a woful sound arose. There was buckling in haste, and riding hard through the darkness, and wild blows, and voices crying at the doors of all the apothecaries in the town.



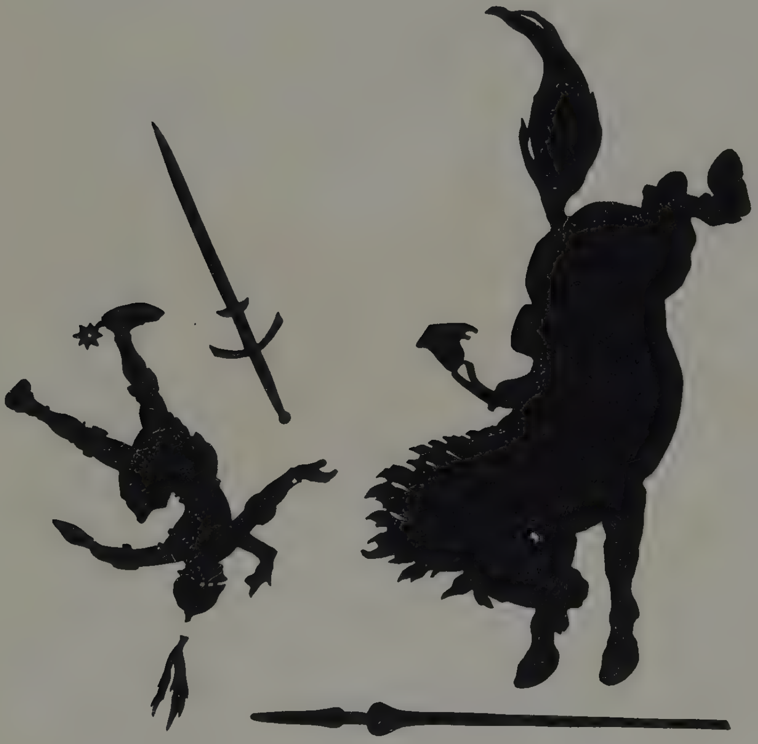
WITH PONDEROUS LANCE IN REST.
HE THUNDERED DOWN THE LISTS.

And when the morning came, the camp wore a melancholy, jaded air. Down hung the proud banners wearily; slow flapped the tent doors in the sullen wind; and there was everywhere a prevalent odor of peppermint and paregoric.

Again the trumpet blew from the castle wall; the drawbridge rattled down; again the retinue of the Don and his daughter swept along the lists.

But the lists were empty, and in the whole camp there was no sound, nor any person to be seen, save one doleful fellow with a plaster on his nose and a bit of raw beef clapped to one dolorously darkened eye.

But while they wondered, there came, from afar off, cantering down the mountain side, a solitary caballero. He made his way across the plain; he rode up the lists in a cloud of dust; and smote upon the shield of Don Santillana Topath, Duke of Tor, a blow that made the spectators jump. "I challenge him to combat!" cried the stranger in a ringing voice, at the sound of which Francella started and clasped her hands.



WENT HEAD-OVER-HEELS IN THE DIRT.

Then the dust cleared away. There, upon a little fat donkey, sat a young fellow in a gabardine of blue and gold, with a white apron tied about his waist.

In his hand he bore a broad strong baker's paddle of ashwood, from which fluttered a banderole. Upon the banderole, on a blue ground, were blazoned a silver lily, and three custard pies rampant. His face was hidden by a mask.

"Come, come!" he cried impatiently. "Am I to wait all day?"

The Marshal ran to the Duke's pavilion, crying, "Senor, senor; they call thee in the lists!"

"Let them call, noisy fellow!" said the Duke, with his head in a bucket of ice-water. "I would not fight, as I feel, for many lilies of Castile . . . my head sings like a humming-top, and my skull is like to burst!" He groaned dismally: "Oh, that supper!"

Again the stranger rode down the lists, and struck the shield of the Baron of Old Bandana till it rang like a Chinese gong. But the Baron came not. The Marshal ran to the Baron's tent, crying: "Senor, senor; they call thee in the lists!"

"A plague on the lists!" groaned the Baron, who was earnestly anointing his forehead with spirits of camphor, and wore a great and puissant mustard plaster where it would do the most good. "A plague on the lists and you! My head spins like a whirligig! I wouldn't fight for the fairest maid in forty kingdoms! Oh, that supper, that supper!" he groaned in bitterness of spirit.

Then the stranger smiled a strange, faraway smile, and smote upon the shields of all the knights within the camp; but not one came forth; for some were groaning, and some were praying, while others were swearing dreadfully; and some threw their boots at the Marshal's head; and some tied themselves up in knots, and rolled along the floor, and in their unremedied anguish called piteously for the apothecary. And the burden of their wailing was ever, "That supper! Oh, that supper!"

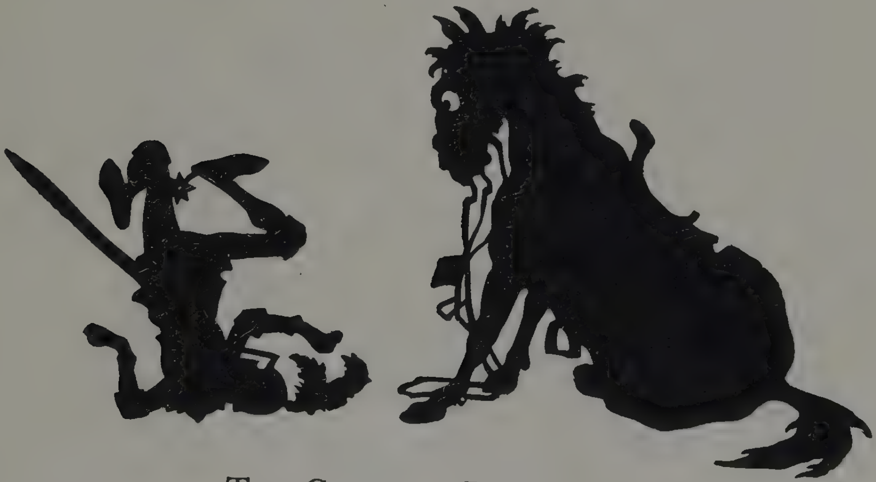
At last they came to the tent of the Marquis of Tounville; and he, being an old campaigner and a veteran glutton, had but an attack of dyspepsia that filled him with yearning to fight a cage of wild cats for pastime. He summoned his blacksmith, and got into his fighting-clothes. Then, with ponderous lance in rest, he thundered down the lists, gritting his teeth until the shivers ran up and down his own spine.

"Who art thou?" he roared hoarsely, "that darest me to joust?"

"Come, and see!" replied the stranger, as he took a good grip on his long ash paddle.

The Marquis put spurs to his fiery steed, and dashed upon the stranger like a thunderbolt.

Francella shrieked, and almost covered her eyes.



THE COMPLETE DOWNFALL.

But the stranger laughed, dug his heels into his donkey's ribs, dodged like a rabbit under the great beam of the Marquis's lance, and, swinging his paddle in the air till it whizzed again, he spanked the Marquis's fiery steed across the flank with such vigor that the fiery steed, a great Norman destrier, gave one tremendous plunge and such a kick of his hind legs that the Marquis went head over heels in the dirt, where he lay with his head going round so fast he did not know which side was up.

The stranger rode around him, and poked him gently in the ribs. "Sir," said he courteously. "Would you be pleased to have more of this diverting game?"

But the Marquis rolled over on his face, and crawled away on hands and knees as fast as he could, under the impression that there had been a great earthquake, that all the mountains in the vicinity were falling, most of them in his direction.

Then the stranger, turning to the great pavilion, cried: "Sir Don, if you have any other able-bodied victims of warlike delusion, bring them on!"

There was a dead silence.

"There don't seem to be any!" said the stranger.

"No," said the Don, looking about in some chagrin. "There don't."

"Then," said the stranger, "it appears to me that I am the victor in the strife, and winner of the fair Francella."

The Don looked doubtfully at the donkey and the baker's paddle. "Hem-m!" he said, and cleared his throat. "I have never seen anything like this in the books of chivalry. Paddles are not mentioned in the book of etiquette."

"See Book Seven," said the stranger, "Page ninety, paragraph nine. Does it not there explicitly state that 'Each contestant shall be full-armed with the weapons and appanages peculiar to his craft?"

"Er-r, ye-es," the Don admitted.

"And is not a baker's paddle both a peculiar weapon and an appanage of that craft?"

"Er-r, ye-es," said the Don. "It certainly is peculiar! But it does not seem to be altogether quite . . . that is to say, not exactly . . . well, you know!"

"Nonsense!" said the stranger. "You know as well as I do, Sir Don, that 'All is fair in love and war.'"

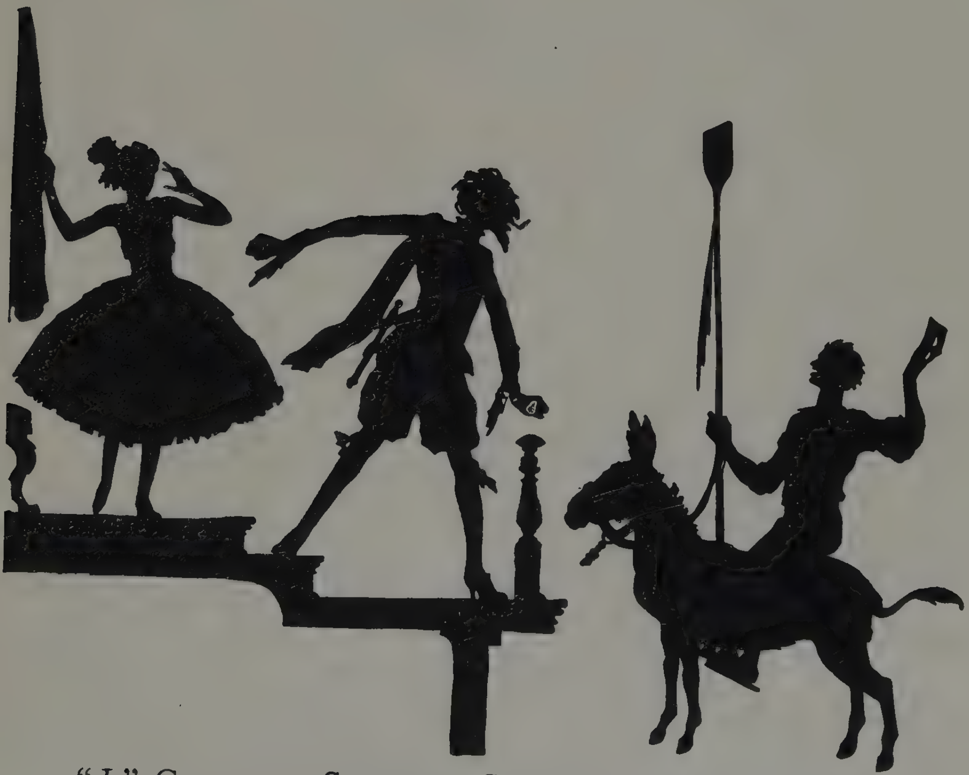
"True," said the Don, "but this isn't war."

"No," said the stranger. "But it *is* love; and, as you may see for yourself, love is given first place in the proverb." At this Francella giggled.

"Yes," rejoined the Don reluctantly. "But before we begin talking of love, or of my daughter, who are you?"

"I," cried the stranger, in a ringing voice, snatching off his mask, "am Pedro Perez!"

"The pie-peddler!" roared the outraged Don, leaping to his feet. "A base-born pie-peddler!"



"I," Cried the Stranger, Snatching Off His Mask, "Am Pedro Perez!"

"Base-born?" cried Pedro stoutly, "No, Sir Don . . . my family is as old as yours, and, though I may have no family tree bigger than a pepper-bush, my ancestry is as good as any."

"What?" cried the Don. "Do you dare compare your lineage with mine?"

"Well," replied Pedro, "I am directly descended from the first occupants of the Garden of Eden. Does your family tree root further back, or begin any higher?"

The Don's sword dropped into its sheath with a clank. He bit his lips. "No," said he sourly. "I can't say that it does. But, if you are thus well-born, Sir Pie-peddler, where are your estates?"

"At the moment I have none," replied Pedro. "But. . . ."

"*But?* Be off, you beggar, you penniless fraud!"

"Not so fast, Sir Don," said Pedro. "I may as yet have no estates of my own; yet am I no beggar, nor penniless. I hold . . ."

"Hold? Poh! What you hold is nothing to me. It may be a lemon tart."

"No," said Pedro. "What I hold is a mortgage upon your castle and lands."

The Don dropped into a chair as if some one had knocked his legs from under him. "How," he gasped, "did you get it?"

"I was the cook who furnished the banquet. The mortgage was my pay."

The Don collapsed.

"Now, my dear Don," said Perez, affably, cocking one leg over the pommel of his saddle, and locking his hands about his knee, "if you prefer to be disagreeable, you may keep your daughter, despite the fact that she loves me, and I love her; and I will foreclose the mortgage to-morrow."

"My dear fellow," cried the Don, changing his expression like a kaleidoscope. "I was merely jesting; upon my soul I was. Arise, Sir Pedro Perez! Francella is yours. Take her, my dear boy; and may you be happy!"

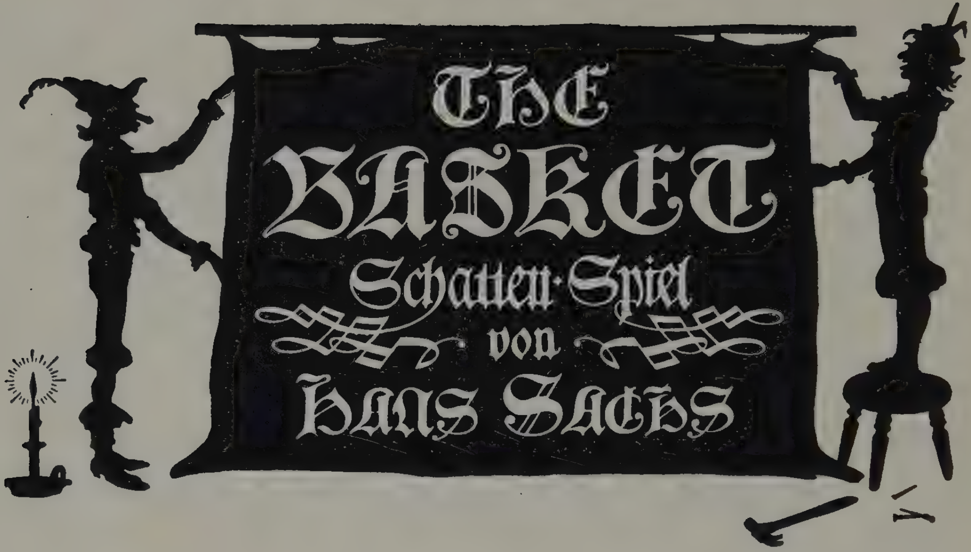
With a glad cry Pedro leaped from his donkey's back and sprang to Francella's side.

"Oh, my dear!" she gasped, ecstatically. "Now I may have all the lemon-custard pasties that I want!"

"Ay; that you may," said he, as he kissed her tenderly. And as Sir Pedro continued to bake, she had.

And as Sir Pedro continued also to hold the mortgage on her father's domain, they all lived together very happily ever after. By the world-wide sale of the famous mince turnover, the toothsome Hot Hottentot, Pedro became prodigiously wealthy. He took over the bottling works; the two industries prospered; and both were lent great dignity and hauteur by the Don's old-fashioned airs.

But the night after the great tournament marks, in old Scandalusian tales, the low-water ebb of chivalry and the peak of apothecation.



Dramatis Personae

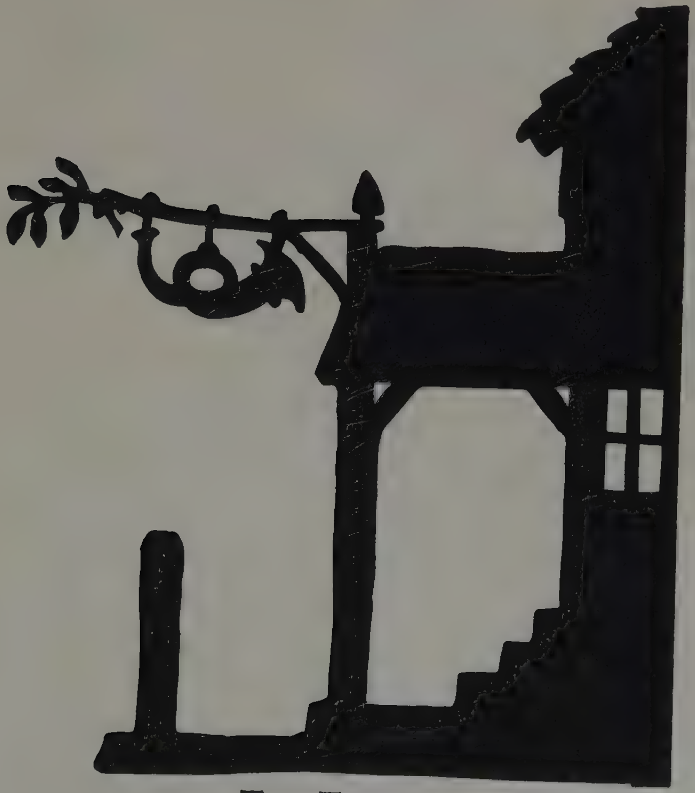
A Reader, with a loud clear voice who tells the tale.
Heinz, a nimble, mischievous lad.
A Peddler, uncouth, unkind.
The Peddler's Wife, uncomely.
The Master, a man of some dignity.
The Mistress, a very haughty person.
The Cook, a robust damsel of appearance rude, of conduct most abrupt.

Place: the public square in Nuremberg; and the dining-room of the Master's house.
Time: the middle of the Sixteenth Century.

Note: Text by Martha T. Bennett, as presented at Dana Hall School, Wellesley.

Prologue

Good gentles all, a play we here present,
And pray you, take it for our fair intent.
Hans Sachs, the master, 'twas, who wrote it down,
A man, you'll grant, of worth and high renown.
The name of it I'll tell to all who ask it —
'Tis short and simple — it is called "The Basket."
And why "The Basket"? That we'll now declare,
If to attend you will your ears prepare.



THE TAVERN.

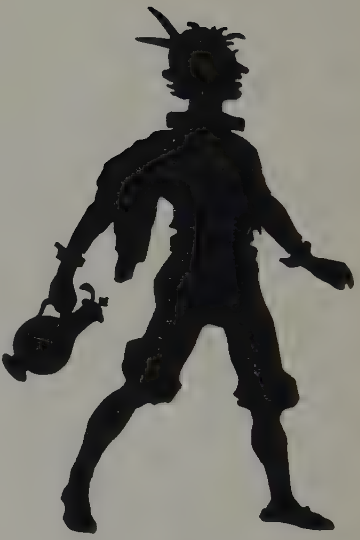
THE BASKET

Act I: Scene 1

Light is here turned on disclosing: The TAVERN:

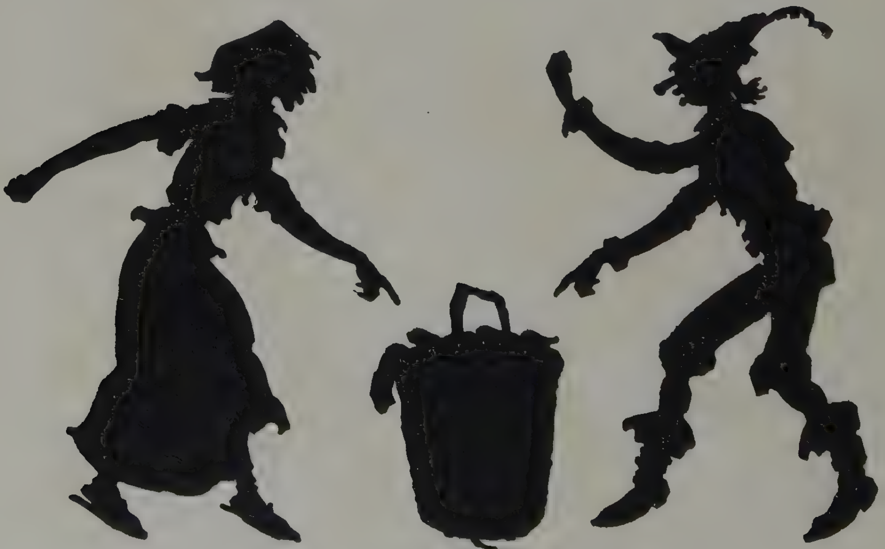
Here enters Heinz: he looks up; he looks down; he sniffs the tankard in his hand; points to the tavern, and is about to enter, when

One Heinz, a 'prentice, on a certain morn,
Sent by his master to the Golden Horn,
To fill his can with spicy tavern wine,
Sees this strange sight beneath the tavern sign:



Enter, from tavern door, a peddler and peddler's wife, quarreling violently.

From out the door, a peddler and his wife,
Carrying a basket, come, in angry strife—



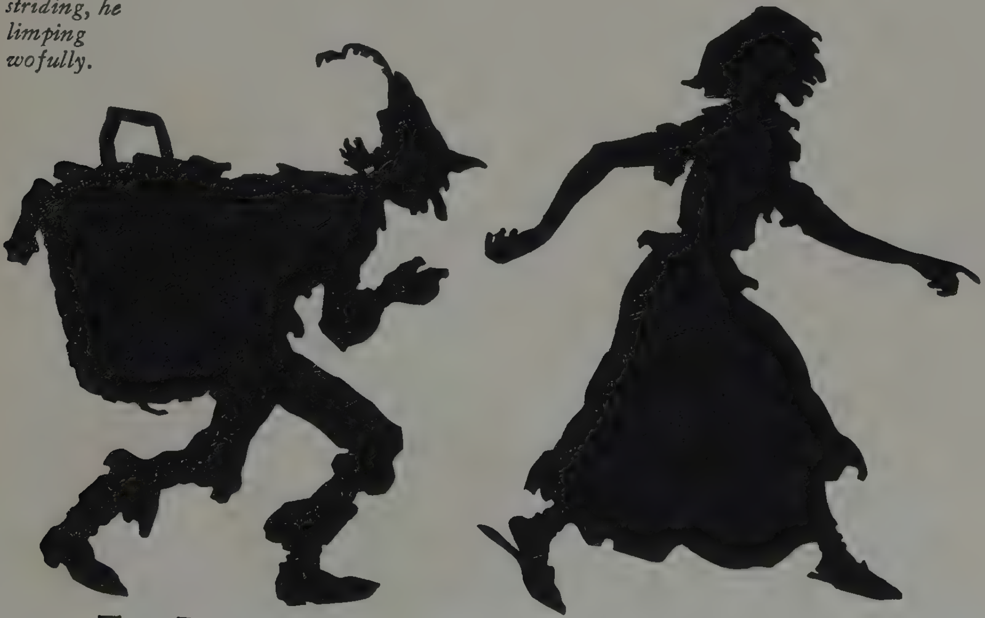
A Peddler and His Wife in Angry Strife.

Heinz retreats, and from the other side observes in pantomimed delight.

Mark well the basket; 'tis the root of all
The growing troubles which we see befall!

The quarrel waxes furious; gestures give way to blows; she has him by the hair; she wins. Amid a rain of blows, upon his knees, the peddler begs for mercy; his wife permits him to rise; and away they go, she striding, he limping wofully.

He bids her take it; she in turn says "Nay."
And why, forsooth? Because the man, at play,
Hath lost twelve groschen — now, alas the day!
He urges; she refuses; so it goes,
Until at last, from words they come to blows.
Now, mark what follows — beaten in the strife,



THE PEDDLER TAKES THE BASKET — NOT THE WIFE!

Heinz, laughing heartily, proceeds to the tavern, skipping and dancing: he enters at the tavern door.

The peddler takes the basket — not the wife!

Here lights go out.

[*Lights out*]

Act II: Scene 1

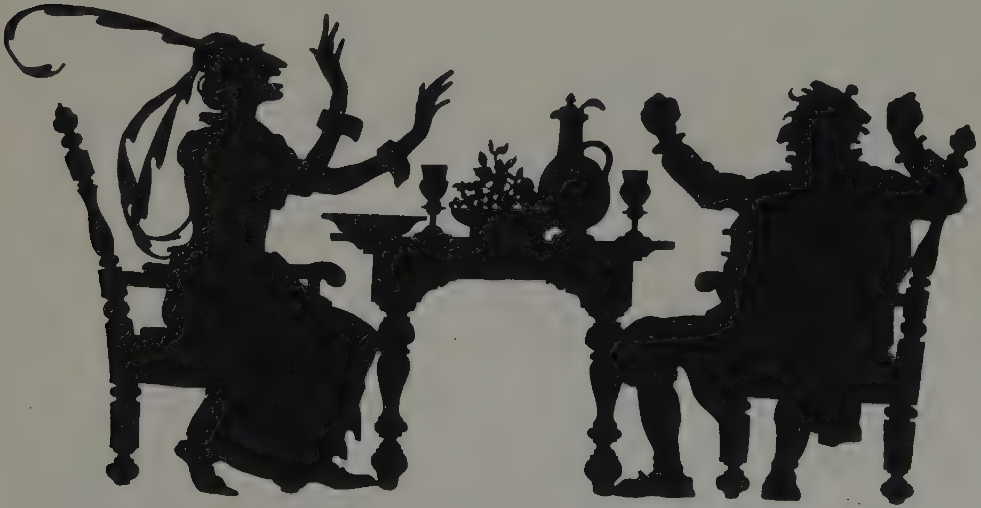
Lights on again, disclosing a table set, master and mistress seated thereat. Master rises, peers beneath his hand; beckons impatiently. Mistress also beckons. Enter Heinz, running, breathless; sets down tankard, and speaks in lively pantomime. Mistress laughs heartily. Heinz shakes with laughter; the master, seated, with stiffening indignation sets down his glass, pounds the table, waves his arms, declaiming. Mistress

Meanwhile, the master and the mistress wait
For Heinz, who comes at last, though late,
And to excuse himself, the tale doth tell
Of what before the Golden Horn befell.
Loud laughs his mistress: “Good, i’faith! Done well!”
What cries the master. “By my staff, I swear
Were I the man, no basket would I bear.
The husband is the master, I maintain;
A haughty spirit is a woman’s bane.
Obedience is the woman’s proper part;
Submissive, mild, I say, should be her heart.
Burdens the wife should carry, if we ask it . . .
Burdens of all kinds — certainly the basket!”

sits rigidly erect, tossing her head. Heinz, behind Master's chair, wide-mouthed.

At the word "basket" back into his chair the Master drops with a final wave. Instantly she takes up in passionate pantomime. Now she; now he; now they together thunder. Heinz listens, silent, staring, watching the fray.

And now, what follows? Hardly has he spoken
That one word "basket," ere their peace is broken;
He conjures her by all her wifely vows.
Alas! each word serves only to arouse
Her haughty spirit; rather will she perish
Than lose the honors that a wife should cherish.
"Not of your love?" he asks, "Or that I ask it?"
"Nor love, nor hate," she cries, "can make me bear the
the basket!"



Now She, Now He, Now They Together, Thunder.

Wild and wilder grows the argument; more and more wrathful the gesticulations!

Then, like the peddler and his shrewish wife,
These grave and reverend persons fall to strife;
For human nature is the same in all,

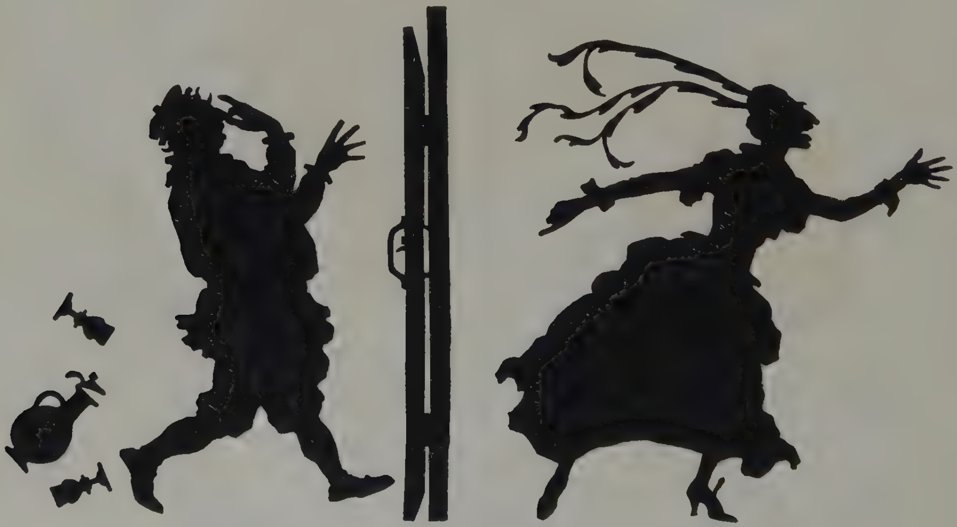
She throws her cup at his head. He flings a plate at hers. She, enraged, runs out; he after. Bang! comes the door. He staggers back, his hands upon his nose.

In master, or in peddler, king, or thrall.
From words — ah, shame! — they come, at last, to blows!
She flies, and slams the door upon his nose!

So exit Master.

Heinz, dismayed, shaking his head, clears

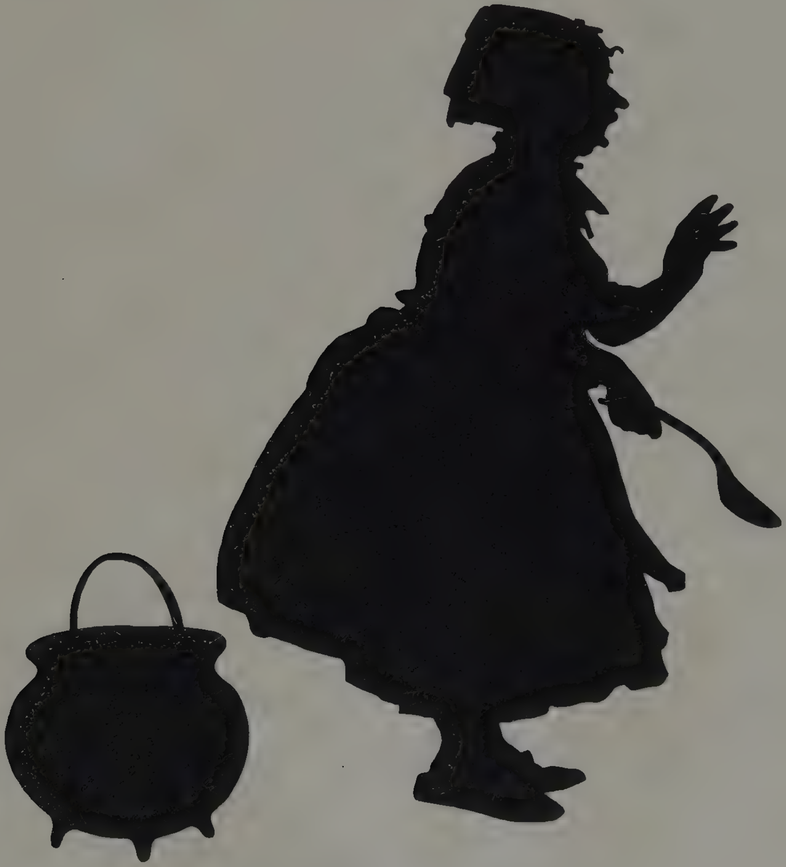
Heinz, left alone, bewildered, sore perplexed;
“Good faith!” he cries, “I wonder much what next



She Flies, and Slams the Door Upon His Nose.

the wreck away, and in pantomime makes plain he'll never do the like again!

Shall chance? Scarce dare I ask it —
A plague on it! Old Nick is in the basket!
Alack! I fear from me this trouble sprung!
In future I'll not talk; I'll hold my tongue."



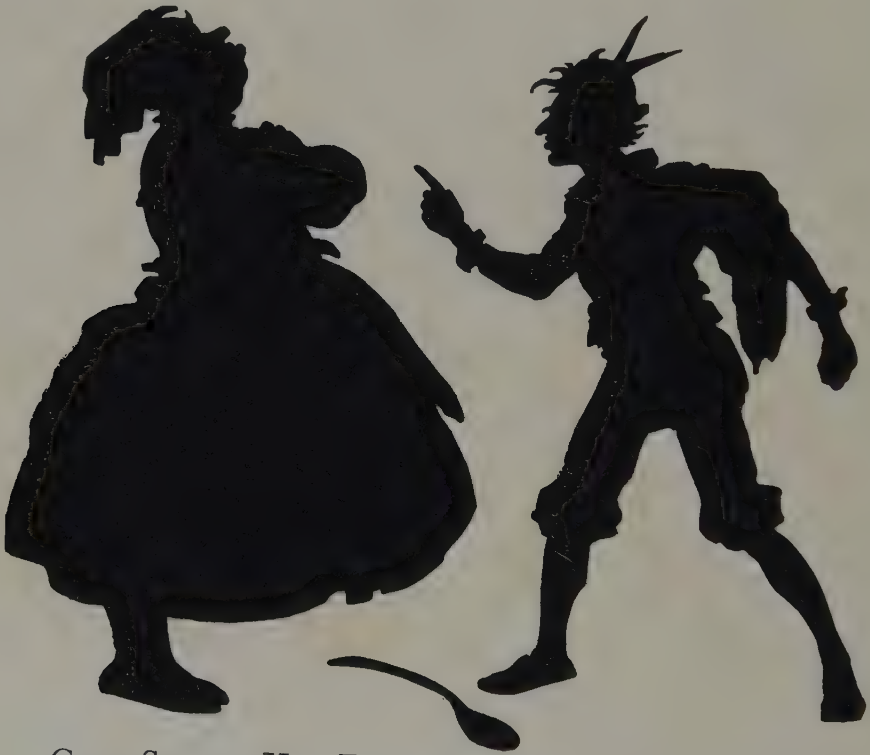
THE COOK APPEARS.

Here enters Cook, awkward, and with walloping tread.

Scarce has he said these words when at the door

She stands astounded at the scene; drops her soup-ladle; gesticulates; and in gesture begs from Heinz a favor.

The cook appears: "Good Heinz, thee I implore;
Do tell me quickly what hath caused the fray
Between our master and his wife, today?"



Cook Stamps Her Foot and Folds Defiant Arms.

In tragic pantomime, absurdly shown, Heinz tells the tale; dumbly enacts the quarrels that have passed.

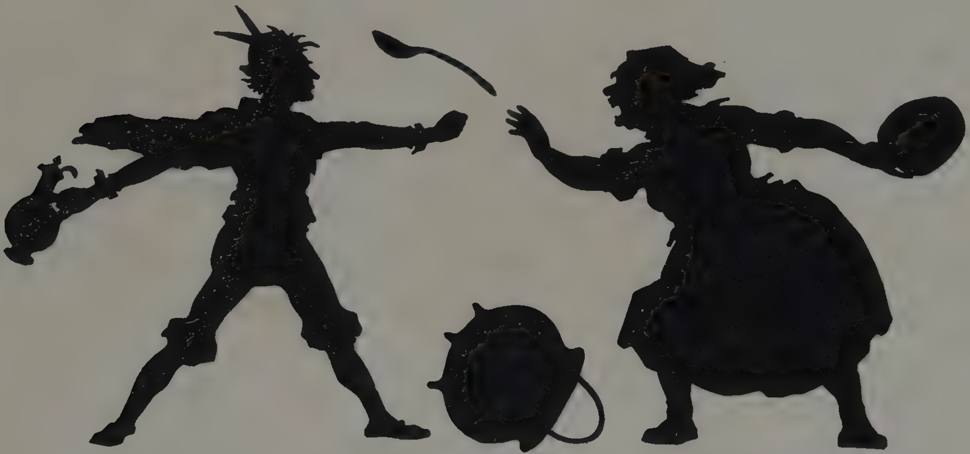
Heinz, all forgetful of his prudent word,
Proceeds to tell her all he's seen and heard.

Cook stamps her foot, and folds defiant arms.

And, as he ends, cries she: "A pretty task! It
Makes me wroth! The wife to bear the basket!"

Heinz shakes his finger in Cooky's face; lays down pantomimic law; then folds his arms haughtily in counter-defiance.

Cries Heinz: "So, cook, is that your mind?
Once you are married, you'll the difference find.
Were I the peddler, and were you my wife,
You'd bear the basket, though it cost your life."



At Last Her Spoon and Pot She Flung at Heinz's Head.

Heinz flouts; Cook leaps and bounds about! To and fro the irate couple go, and shake their fists beneath each other's noses.

Once more, eheu! the fire begins to rage;
Each rails at other: you should read the page
Where Master Sachs wrote down the words they said;
So hot they were they'd quite have melted lead!

Here falls poor Heinz, extinguished by Cook's pot; and exit Cooky.

! ! ! ! !

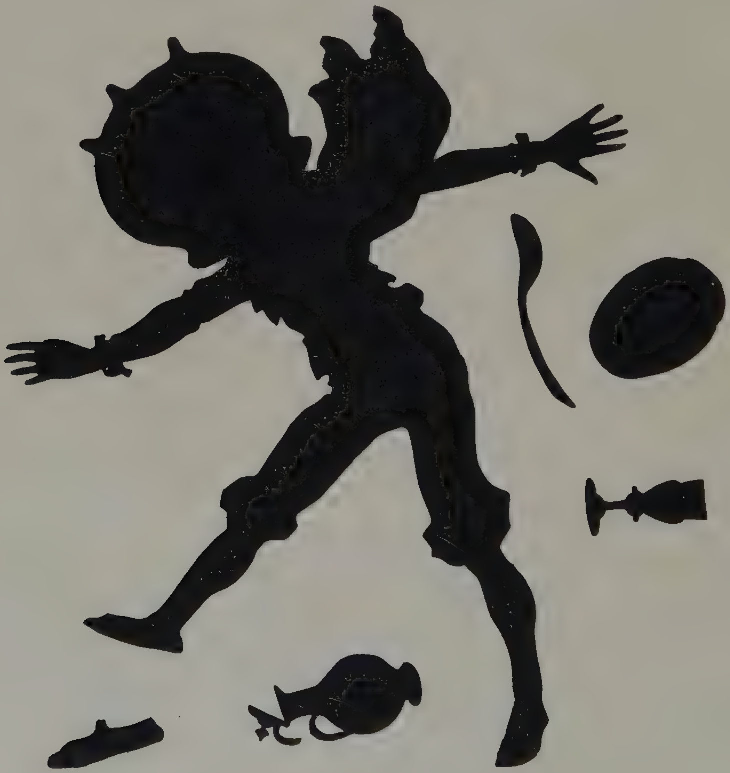
* * * * *

Thrice was Cook armed, her quarrel she deemed just;
And, sure, all women think so, too, I trust!
At last her spoon and pot she flung at Heinz's head;
And, as he, conquered, fell, out, through the door, she fled.

* * * * * *

In loud, clear voice this moral should be read; while Heinz sits on the floor, Cook's pot upon his head.

Lo! such the shadow-play! And, after it, what then?
Take the morality thereof, good men!
In this ye mark how quickly quarrels rise,
Even as clouds o'ercast the clearest skies.



He, Conquered, Fell.

Here let poor Heinz arise and bear the pot away, slowly and sorrowfully, shaking his head.

Learn well the lesson these examples teach:
Let each man bear the burden given to each;
Let no man meddle with his neighbor's strife,
But hold his tongue, and look to his own life!

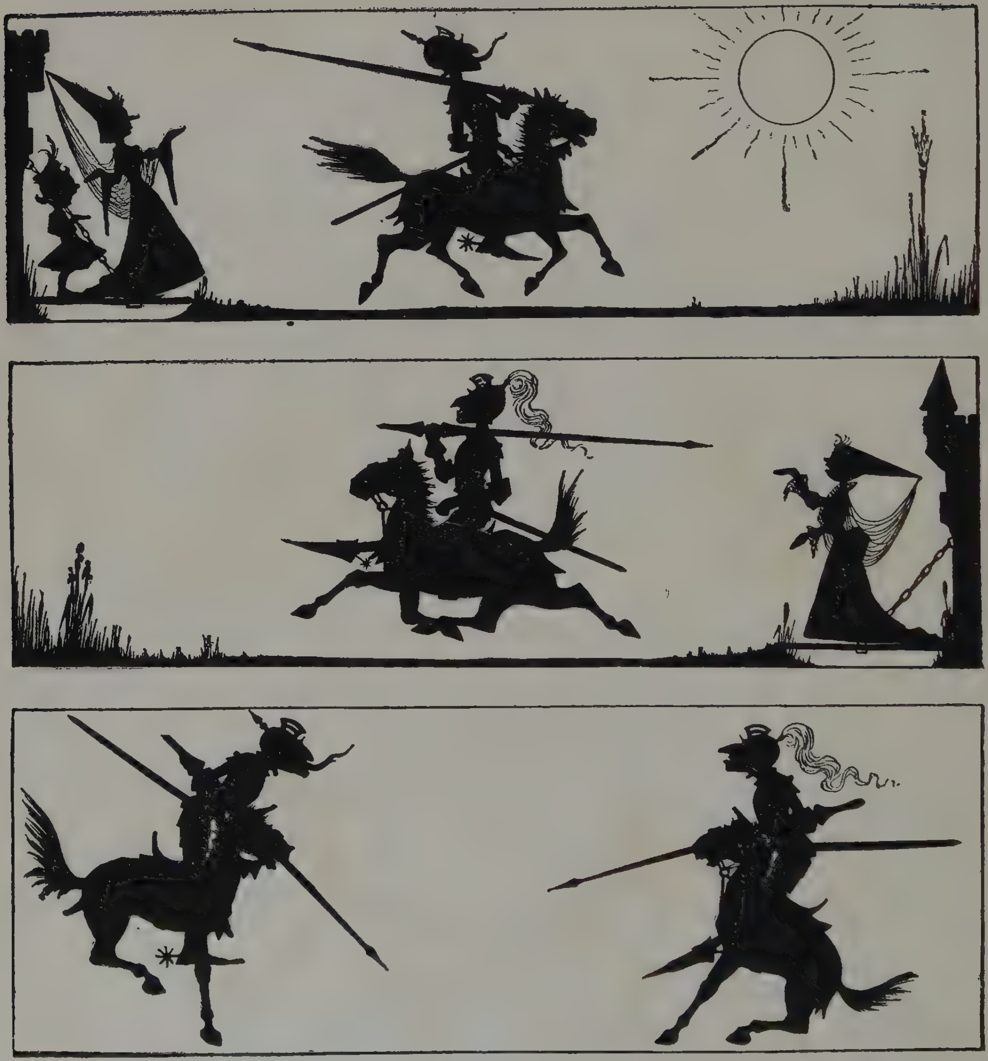
And now, good gentles all, good-day, good-day, good-day!

This, then, the lesson; thus we do unmask it;
And learn, as Heinz learned, from the peddler's basket.

Here re-enter all . . . Master and Mistress, Peddler and Wife, Heinz and Cooky. The Peddler bears the Basket, which he places in the centre; group divides, Men left of Basket, Women right, as always they think they are. All deeply bow, amid profuse applause. Now douse the lights, and empty all the house.

How It All Ended

A Wordless Romance When Knights Were Bold



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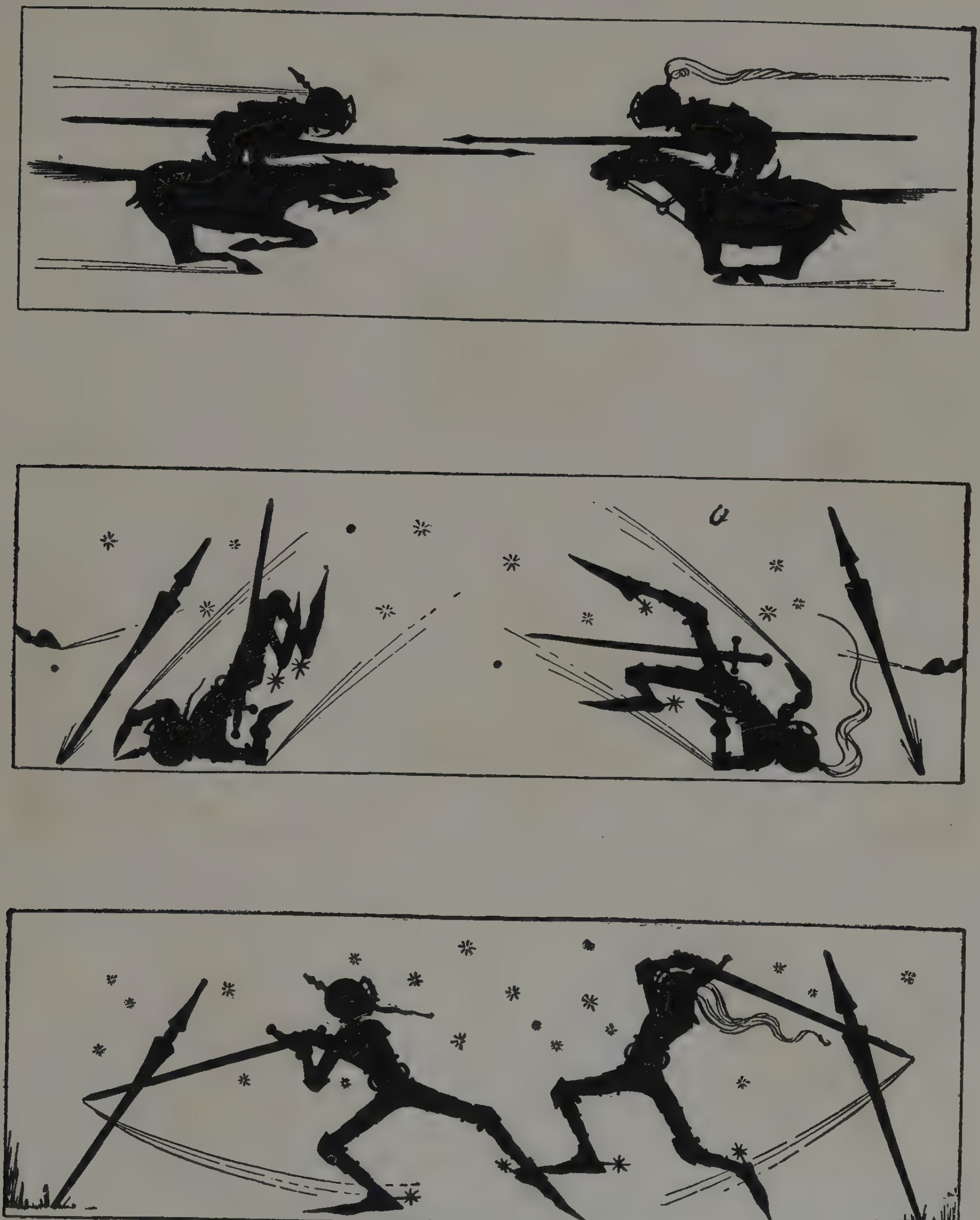

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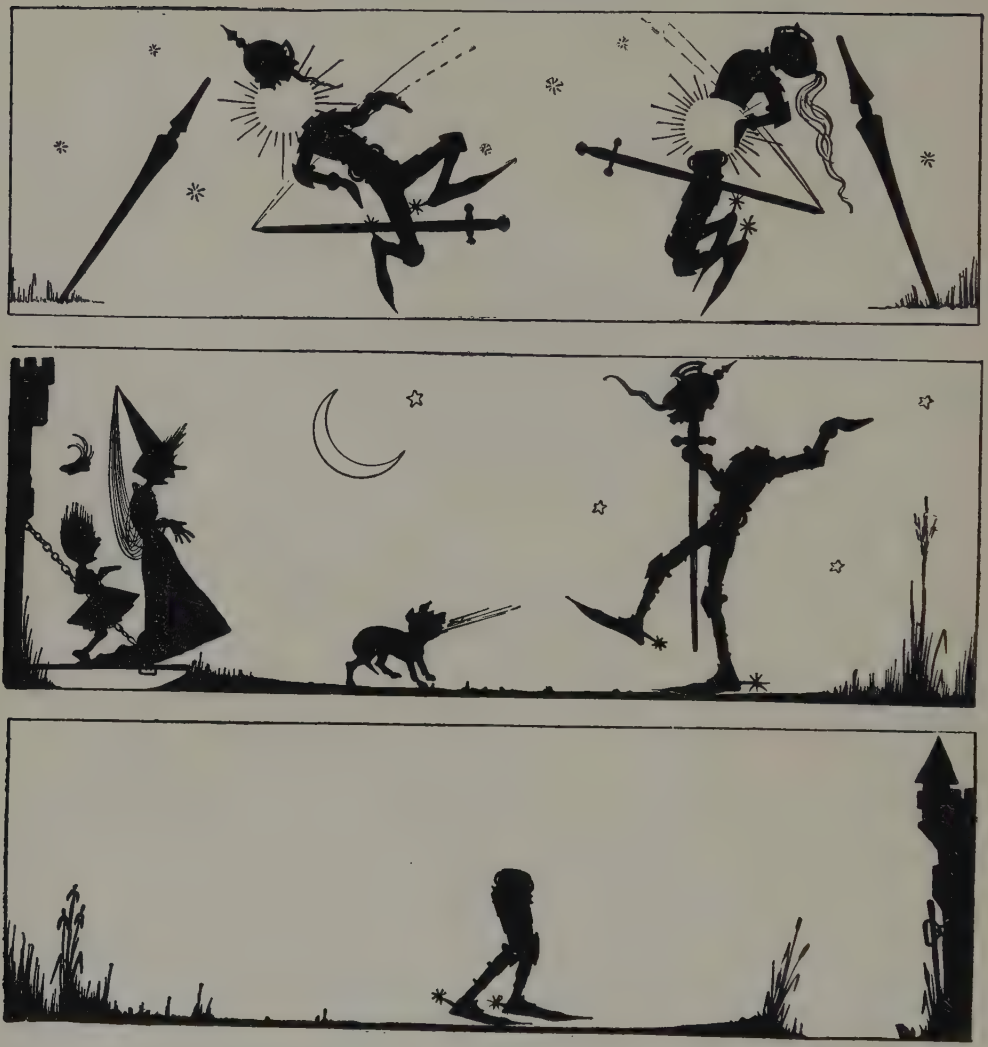

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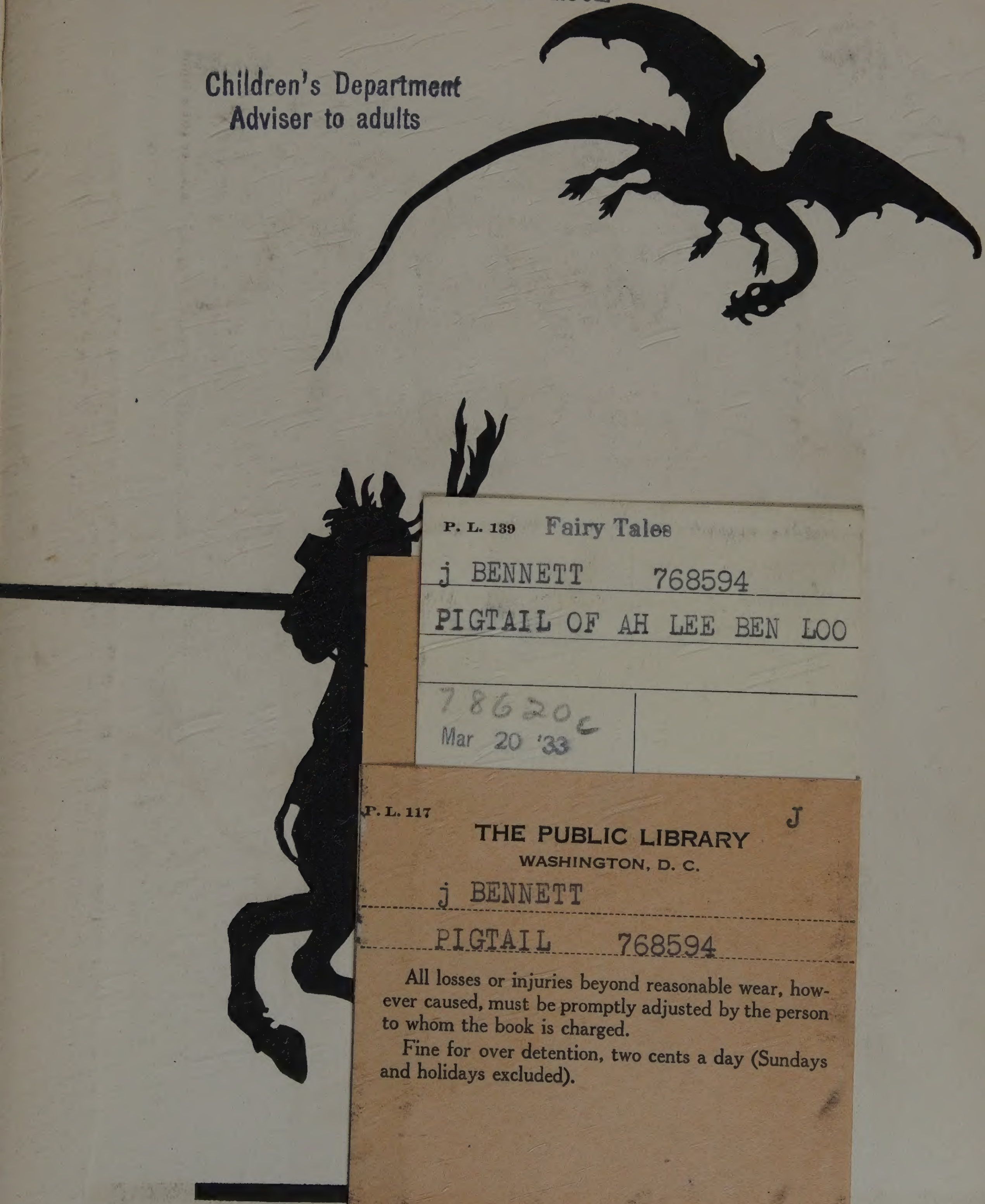

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